CHILDREN OF THE WAY

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BY

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TO THE MEMORY OF
MY MOTHER
ANNE CROSBY EMERY

For me the charter is Jesus Christ.

IGNATIUS.

How did Christianity arise and spread abroad among men? Was it by institutions, and establishments, and well-arranged systems of mechanism? Not so. . . . It arose in the mystic deeps of men's souls; and was spread abroad by the "preaching of the word," by simple altogether natural and individual efforts; and flew, like hallowed fire, from heart to heart.

THOMAS CARLYLE.

Two of the sketches in this volume have already appeared in the *North American Review: Almost Thou Persuadest Me* and (in its original form) *A More Excellent Way.* The author is indebted to the Editors for permission to republish them.

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A LIVELY HOPE

I

Nero, the reigning Emperor, in nicked travertine, had the chance that March afternoon from his corner shelf in a workman's living room to look down upon a happier company than the master of Rome in person was ever likely to see. Felix, a stone-cutter, had proudly called his relatives and friends together to celebrate the Name Day of his first son, born eight days ago. But since no new pride could dispossess his little daughter Agatha, five years older, of her place in his heart, he made the occasion into a festa for both children, invoking as it did the benevolence of those kindly spirits who watched over Roman families and kept the members of them safe and united.

Felix belonged to the upper stratum of Roman artisans, and was able to rent a respectable

if small house fairly near the Forum, in the street called the Argiletum, where many booksellers and also shoemakers had their shops. Both he and his wife, Priscilla, had excellent family traditions harking back to independent farms in the country, and it would have seemed a calamity to them to live in one of the tall, crowded, dirty tenement buildings which housed so many of Rome's poorer workers. Owing to superior intelligence and industry in a remunerative trade Felix could afford the rental of a whole house, boasting a modest privacy, in a small block of houses in a decent quarter. Each house had the conventional if small *atrium,* opening on the street, and back of this a peristyle of the same size, with four tiny rooms opening off from the corners. Each vestibule in the little block was flanked by bookshops, and many a time Felix used to linger by the open counters and read the latest publishers' notices. Indeed, he had struck up rather an intimate friendship with Charinus, the Greek freedman, who handled the shop on the

right of his own door, and lived in a tenement house on the corner above. The Greek was an omnivorous reader of the wares he sold, and an independent and skeptical thinker. Seneca and Lucan—wrapped in their social and literary prestige—would have been amazed if they had heard the caustic opinions of themselves that were poured into the ears of an obscure artisan by an obscure retail clerk. But this afternoon even Charinus seemed to share in the unsophisticated cheer and good will of his friend's household.

It was owing to their house that Felix and Priscilla were able, however simply, to keep up some of the home ceremonies sanctioned by many generations and all classes, but crowded out of the life of the really poor by the cramped squalor of their surroundings. There was even room enough for this gala event originating in the obligations of religion, but grown warm with the associations of family life. Memories of childhood mellowed the hearts of those who had come away for a few hours from the tasks and

cares of burdened lives, and a child seeing it all for the first time entered unconsciously into the fold of family traditions. Agatha had watched the preparations with wide-eyed interest, while the *atrium* was being scrupulously cleaned and adorned. Her Aunt Clara and Cousin Lydia had come in to help Delia who was taking care of the house while her mother so mysteriously stayed in bed. The stone floor had been washed. The table in front of the hearth, where the family always ate, had been spread with a clean white cloth taken from the old chest which was opened only on feast days. The silver salt-cellar that had belonged to her grandfather, for whom the baby was to be named, had been polished until Agatha could see the end of her little nose in it and placed in the middle of the table, while around it were set pitchers of wine mixed with water and plates of honey cake. Her cousin Lydia had brought a basketful of gilly flowers and lilies, and her mother herself had come from her room, her hair bound on top with ribbons but all wavy over her forehead, to

make a lovely wreath to lay on the hearth for Lar. With him Agatha felt quite intimate because every day, before she and "Tata" and "Mama" began their dinner, she said aloud to him a little prayer.

When everything was ready, aunts and uncles and cousins began to come, and various friends of whom only Victor and Philip, her favorites among the older boys of the neighborhood, seemed important to Agatha. She had been on tiptoe with happy expectation, but at first she was disappointed and almost frightened because they all stood about solemnly and talked in low voices. Her mother and father seemed far away, over by the hearth together, so she crept closer to Philip and slipped her hand into his. Then the door opened and Delia brought in the baby. His funny little face puckered and he began to cry. For eight days Agatha had wondered how so big a cry could come out of so little a head. Tender-hearted, she loved the baby even more than she did her pretty caged bird, banished to-day to the inner

room, and she wanted to run to him now. But just then her father, with the kindest smile, came forward and gathered him away from Delia up in his own arms against his shoulder. He said to everybody, "This is Titus," and hung around his neck the same sort of little leather case that Agatha wore herself—she had been told that it was to protect her against evil spirits. Then he turned toward the fire and said some long prayers. Agatha heard vaguely names she had herself been taught to use in her prayers at bedtime—Vaticanus, of the child's first cry, Fabulinus, of his first words, Cuba who soothes his cot, Domiduca, who brings him home. Growing very tired with the unintelligible weight of words, she leaned more heavily against Philip who dropped her hand and put his arm restfully around her back. She was drifting cozily off to sleep when the words stopped, and Philip moved, and people began to laugh and talk, and Delia and Aunt Clara stirred busily about the room.

This was the festa that Agatha had expected,

with smiling faces and cheerful sounds and things to eat. Almost like the wine and sweet cakes, she herself was passed about from guest to guest, lifted up in strong arms, and kissed and teased for her red curls. Every one who gave the baby a present gave her one too. They were mostly fascinating little metal figures and Philip said he would string them together in a chain. Her father, still holding his son, cuddled her up in his other arm and called her his winsome doll—*blanda pupa*. And her mother came and lifted the warm hair from her neck and laid her cool, smooth cheek against hers.

All in all it had been a very happy afternoon, indeed, and when it was over the house seemed quiet and dull. Felix had kissed his daughter good-bye and hurried off, late, to a supper at his guild-hall. Her mother, usually so satisfying a playmate, had gone back to her bed-room, taking the baby with her. The house door, carelessly left unlatched by the last departing guest, suddenly swung open under the March wind, and the Roman street with a thousand voices

called to Agatha. There was no one to hinder her from running out. Even Delia had stepped into the tiny pantry back of the living room. Lar was silent above the hearth, Nero stared sardonically from his shelf. Agatha's eager feet hurried her through the teasing doorway, her boyish little face still alive with the excitement of the afternoon, her bright curls aglint in the lingering sunlight, her dimpled arms clasping close a new terra-cotta doll, painted yellow, which Aunt Clara had brought her. She had never been out before without her father or mother, but she was a fearless child, with a high spirit unusual in a girl. Strangers often took her for a boy in her straight abbreviated tunic, with red hair cut short in front and curling loose at the nape of her firm white neck.

At the party she had heard Victor and Philip make plans for a game of "Odd and Even" after Philip had gone back for an hour to the jewelry shop on the Via Sacra where he usually worked all day. Utterly ignorant of how far this Sacred Way was from her father's house,

childishly tempted out by the gaiety of the streets, and childishly bent on finding again her adored friends, little Agatha strayed off into the power of the heedless, ruthless metropolis. Where was Domiduca, the home-bringer?

II

The street in which Agatha lived stretched down past the beautiful Æmilian Basilica where the banks were, and, entering the Forum, met the Via Sacra near the Temple of Janus, whose doors were open—as they practically always were—because Rome was at war. Just now it was with the Armenians in the Far East, and every now and then a company of dark-skinned, unhappy looking captives would be marched along the thoroughfares. Philip had seen some early this morning when, on his way to work, he had stopped, as he often did, at the corner of the Basilica to look up at the splendid temple of Juno on the Capitoline Hill, and the gable of the Senate House. Near Agatha

towered the greatness of Rome, but it was powerless to protect her, nor did she herself know or think about Juno or Senate. Her firm little legs were still far too short to carry her more than a block beyond her father's house.

Even here, well above the Forum, she was in a dense crowd and made her way between a motley collection of human legs. It was the congested period of the late afternoon when rich and poor alike were in transit from their day to their evening life. Now and then—for Romans loved children—some one smiled down at the bright curls, but passed on without noticing that the child was alone. To her own baby eyes and ears the pageantry of the Eternal City was a gigantic plaything. Unvexed by the insolence of the young aristocrat whose litter was jostling pedestrians to right and left, she was enchanted by the swing of his scarlet cloak. Untroubled by the peddler's tattered misery, she loved the deep rich voice in which he kept offering to exchange sulphur matches for broken glass. She had not toddled far before

she reached the corner where a narrow alley broke into the Argiletum. A shoemaker's shop occupied the lower floor of the corner building. To an upper story was fastened a rough shrine containing a little wooden image of Vulcan. On the side-walk, just where street and alley met, a very fat man was selling boiled beans and shouting them out to the crowd. A very thin man was stopping to buy some, and a dog was looking beseechingly up into his face.

Agatha loved every dog, and stopped, in delight, to see this one. He was so thin that all his bones showed, and in his eyes there was a look of patient misery which reached Agatha's tender heart, without her knowing why. His master had the same look in his face, but this Agatha did not see. While he was exchanging a small coin for a spoonful of beans dumped out on a dirty piece of paper she ran up to make friends with the sniffing animal.

It was a little dog, littler than she was herself. For one moment they met as friends amid Rome's greatness. The next—so sudden are

the ways of destiny—they became victims of Rome's cruelty. A snapping big dog in the street, evoking even a hungry little dog to combat, Agatha's impulsive and protective chase of her new friend, a huge wagon of marble unlawfully rumbling through the street at this early hour because Pomponius was hurrying the contractor on his new house on the Esquiline —these were the causes of the tragedy. Just what happened the vender of beans was unable later to explain to Felix. He was selling beans to a wretched looking customer when he heard the snarling of dogs, a heavy thud of falling marble in the street—although at the time he didn't know what that noise was—and then a shriek from a by-stander, "the child is killed." He and the ragged customer had dashed out and picked up Agatha and the man's dog—they were lying quite close together, crushed by the same piece of marble—it was a reddish piece, he remembered, with prominent gray veins in it. A crowd collected at his corner, of course, and he would have been put to it to know what

to do with the dead body of an unknown child if just then the boy had not come along—Felix knew the rest.

The boy was Philip, returning from the shop, and it was he who, striving pitifully to play the man, led the way home for little Agatha at the close of that March day.

III

For the poorest in Rome the tragedy of death was deepened by promiscuous burial in unseemly ditches, made like huge cisterns, which outraged every traditional feeling about the care of the body and the peace of the dead. But the guild to which Felix belonged, among its other mutual services, maintained a Columbarium, a substitute for the elaborate funeral chambers where the rich from generation to generation stored the ashes of family and dependents. Here, in a niche apportioned for Felix and his wife and children, the ashes of little Agatha were placed by tender hands. Her

father with his own chisel cut the inscription on the stone to go under the simple urn. Beneath the conventional heading "D. M."—Diis Manibus, to the Deified Dead—he seemed to cling to the charm of the child's body and the music of her lips by making the cold stone say for her:

"While I lived I played and was loved by everybody. My face was like a boy's, believe me, not like a girl's. Only my father and mother knew that I was Agatha. I had red hair cut short in front and curling loose in the neck behind."

All that he and Priscilla could do for her was over and finished on the eve of the Feast of Minerva, their favorite festival. On this holiday they had first met, and swiftly fallen in love with each other, answering the lead of the sweet spring weather when even the city air caught the smell of hyacinths and daffodils. And since then each Nineteenth of March, with its wide-flung public festivities in honor of the patroness of all arts and crafts, the "goddess of a thousand works," had seemed to celebrate

again for them the precious happiness of their life together. Agatha became a part of it too, for they used to take her out with them on their holiday expeditions. Lifted high on her father's shoulder, twining her arms close about his neck, she would kick her soft, bare, pink heels against his breast and shake her red curls in excitement over the gay processions and the shouts and cheers of the crowd.

This year the feast-day spelled only desolation for Felix and Priscilla. To the absorbing, if tragic, occupations of the first days of sorrow, succeeded the full, bitter realization of loss. The sky was over-cast and leaden, the house was damp and cold. Priscilla, pretty, merry Priscilla, so young and inexperienced in trouble, and still so tired and weak from childbirth, could only stay in bed and try, for her husband's sake, to stem the racking outbursts of tears. Even her new baby failed to comfort her, his tiny fingers seeming only to clutch at her poor heart with memories of her first-born and first-beloved. Felix had no advantage of

her, although he could escape when evening came from the mutilated home at the call of a public obligation. In the end this served only to reveal further the absence of all comfort.

Felix was treasurer of his guild and would be expected to present a report at an important meeting always held on the Feast of Minerva. Usually he enjoyed to the full the interest and comradeship to be found in these gatherings. The stone-cutters belonged to the more intelligent of the proletariat, having nothing in common with the slovenly greed of those who could be drugged by free shows and free doles of bread into forgetfulness of their rights and proper interests. These self-supporting artisans guarded their trade up to the limit of their power and often meditated on rights which they could not obtain under the imperial government. A few among them were radicals and agitators, at least whispering behind closed doors of revolution. But the larger number, of whom Felix was one, accepted life as it was with a certain philosophic calm which might have won the ad-

miration of Seneca if he had climbed down from the heights where he contemplated "humanity" to any real knowledge of the common people. Their guilds fed their self-respect, uniting hard-working units into a friendly company on a basis of equality, and offering in the administration of common affairs a certain recompense for their insignificance in the affairs of the empire.

The large, cheerful guild-room was fairly illuminated to-night with terra-cotta lamps, contrasting happily with the cramped, ill-lighted quarters in which even the best of the members lived. The supper was dressed up with extra dishes and wine. The conversation was lively, with broadsides of humor to suit the holiday mood. Felix was praised for his excellent official work, and treated with liking and sympathy by all. But none of this brought any comfort to him. A year ago he would not have believed that the comradeship of these men could leave him so cold. To-night their warm presence gave no relief whatever to his longing for a little child. He was infinitely relieved

when the duties and the empty "pleasures" of the evening were over and he could go back again to his broken home.

At the next corner, after leaving the guild-room, he happened to meet Charinus, returning from his guild, and they fell into step together for the half hour's walk. If anything had been lacking to complete the day's sense of despair, Felix now found it in his friend's mood. The dangerously narrow streets, always noisy after dark with the heavy carts forbidden by day and with the ordinary brawling of the great city, to-night abandoned themselves to the unrestrained merrymaking of the augmented crowds. If sorrow isolated Felix from this seething hilarity, cynical skepticism did the same for Charinus. It came to expression near the doorway of his tenement house, as they dodged a roistering band with wagging torches.

"You Romans like your Minerva drunk," he exclaimed. "What a farce this whole business of religion is! Why can't we take a day off from work, or celebrate our own inventiveness,

without running a lot of Olympian phantoms as patrons?''

Felix quickly laid his hand on Charinus's arm. ''Hush,'' he said, ''it's unlucky to say a thing like that.'' Charinus laughed mockingly. ''There you go,'' he said, ''you don't believe in Minerva any more than I do. It's luck you really believe in—Fate—Destiny. Fate starts us living here, we don't know why, snaps us off again, we don't know why. Perhaps it's the crowd that's wise, and we are the fools to keep sober for to-morrow's grind.

''See here, Felix''—the lust of talk had laid hold of the Greek—''I've been wondering about you lately. You're what people call religious. You keep up family prayers and I know that in your guild you are considered quite pious. Well, what good does it do you, now that trouble comes?'' Not deterred by Felix's silence, he went on, with rather merciless curiosity. ''Do you remember a discussion we had once over immortality after I had been reading Seneca's new book? You had never questioned your in-

herited belief before. You seemed to believe about as I imagine your great-grandfather did, that there's a world of shadows somewhere or other, and your ancestors live there and have to be remembered at certain times in a deified sort of way. It struck me as a horrible belief compared with my own theory of annihilation. Well, now, Felix, tell me, do you believe your little girl is in a black, shadowy world, and is it any comfort to you?''

They had reached Charinus's door and he suggested that Felix should come in and ''talk it over''—conversation was as good as wine any day. But Felix declined with the excuse that his wife would be lying awake until he should come home. Between their doors lay a length of street almost empty now of pedestrians, giving Felix a brief solitude. Rain had begun to fall, and a chill seemed to fill the air and ooze up out of the pavement. Cold thoughts lay heavy on his mind. Was Charinus right, that he believed in nothing but Fate? He tried to make real to himself some sort of a belief that would

comfort him for Agatha. Nothing materialized. He tried to see as real Minerva in his guild, Jupiter and Juno up on the Capitoline Hill, Lar on his hearth. He tried to stare beyond the little niche in the Columbarium into some place where Agatha might be. Everywhere he found only darkness, ignorance. All he was sure of, through his whole being, was that Agatha was dead, her rosy flesh turned to ashes, her sweet voice and laughter stricken dumb, her loving ways vanished into nothingness. He opened his door and entered the small *atrium,* dark and cold with the rain splashing through the opening of the roof into the stone basin. Faintly from a room beyond he heard Priscilla sobbing.

IV

The next morning Felix rose as usual before the sun, as he had a long distance to walk to his shop across the Tiber and the Roman working day began early. The weather had cleared after midnight, and the luminous dawn presaged

a fair day. How fair it was to be for Felix—so swift are the ways of the spirit—he little dreamed. Heavy-hearted and worn from a restless night he struck across the Forum which was already busy with other workmen on their laborious ways, and with irritable dependents scurrying to the morning receptions of rich patrons. He was on the bridge across the Tiber before the sun rose brilliantly, flushing with the bloom of a new day even the west toward which he walked, and waking the east to a splendid energy. The muddy river in this fresh light smiled to its stirring traffic. The air was magically sweet and full of spring.

When Felix reached his shop, near the Transtiberine end of the bridge, he flung open the linen curtains and let the air blow through the room. After a holiday there were odds and ends to attend to inside before he should go to the yard with his own chisel and distribute work to his three apprentices. He had taken down from a corner cupboard some wax tablets of notes and settled himself at his desk to look

them over, when an early customer arrived. Felix worked for a simple clientèle, and this man was no exception. He wore the girt-up tunic and conical cap of a working-man and carried a carpenter's kit of tools. The thing about him that was unusual and caught the puzzled attention of Felix, at an hour when most men seemed hurried or fretful, was an air of deep serenity. The stone-cutter was almost surprised when he announced the same gloomy errand that brought most customers to the shop. He wanted, he said, a gravestone cut for a child, for his own little daughter, in fact. He spoke with a strange, quieting composure which conveyed an impression even of contentment, as if all were well with him in spite of his errand. He gave his name, Lucius Licinius, and his address near the Circus Maximus, though he was working now for a contractor in Nero's gardens this side of the Tiber. Then he dictated to Felix the inscription which he wanted cut. "No," he said, "please omit the D. M. Just begin with the child saying,

" 'I lived eight years, seven months and five days'—the father seemed to count them up afresh—'I was intelligent beyond my years, lovely to look at, nicely behaved, and I had sweet, caressing ways which called out love.' "

A knife seemed to cut Felix, but his customer went on: "Draw a line under that, please, and then add, '*Vives in Deo*—thou shalt live in God—be alive in God,' " he repeated, as if to himself as well as to Felix, a beautiful cadence coming into his quiet voice. Then he rose to go, leaving Felix amazed, ensnared, by the concluding sentence the like of which he had never been asked to cut before. At the door, before passing out to the street, the customer, as naturally as he had given his strange order, did another strange thing. Flashing back a smile, he said: "Good-bye, brother." Had he felt, in the interchange of business, a stir of feeling from the stone-cutter toward himself? Afterwards, when the two men had become closer than many brothers and talked of this first meeting, he said simply that he had been "led" to

speak that way. At any rate, his surprising word, breaking through every barrier, reached the aching, despairing heart of Felix. "Stop, please stop," he cried, hurrying forward, "tell me what you mean. My child has died too. How can she be alive?"

Into the face of Lucius swept a look of illumination, as if some inner light were pulsing outward. He dropped his tools on the floor and began to speak, rapidly, eagerly. Felix did not follow consciously all that he said. Almost vaguely he heard the words, "God," "Father," "Love," "Goodness," "Eternal Life," as they struck upon his unaccustomed ears. But he was spell-bound by the man's extraordinary and passionate certitude. When, putting his hand on Felix's shoulder and looking straight in his eyes, he said simply, "I know that our children live," this certitude was like a flame leaping from one man's mind and heart to another's, shriveling perplexities and doubts, setting on fire every hidden hope. An amazing warmth penetrated to the frozen heart of Felix and nes-

tled there, even though Lucius stopped abruptly and stooped down for his tools. The iron necessity of a laborer under orders was evidently forcing him away. As he lifted his kit, he said earnestly, "Brother, I have much to tell you. Let me come back after hours this afternoon." "Yes, come," said Felix, "I want to hear you."

And that was why, before the darkness fell on that March afternoon, Felix—as he used to say in his old age—took the first step toward a light which never failed him. Through the day he worked as one in a dream, beset with a premonition of some strange, unimagined good fortune awaiting him. And at the close, he and his new friend, with many hours of scrupulous work to their credit, walked and talked together. In the crowded, raucous city streets which had been so heedless of Agatha her father heard the story of Jesus Christ, who had taken from death its sting, from the grave its victory. Lucius had had it from his brother-in-law, Olius, a soldier of the prætorian guard, and he had had it directly, when he was on guard duty, from an

extraordinary government prisoner, named Paul, who preached every day to groups of visitors. Olius, though despising the Jews and Greeks who crowded in, had listened first because Paul was kind and thoughtful toward him. Lucius had listened first because he was told that the Jesus whom this Paul preached was a carpenter. And now Felix was listening because Lucius, on the word of this same carpenter, asserted that Agatha still lived. "I know it is true," he said simply, "because Jesus Christ has conquered death and promised us eternal life."

Clear and joyful, the words seemed to ring through the hawking cries of the peddlers, the whining of the beggars, the sharp warning calls of the slaves clearing the way for the litters of rich men on their way home to dinner. As Felix listened, he did not know which he wanted most—to hear his new friend say this new, mad, sweet thing over and over, or to rush home and himself say it to the mother of Agatha.

THE GOOD SHEPHERD

On a cold cloudy day of November, in the late afternoon, a beggar on one of the bridges across the Tiber watched the passers-by hungrily. But he did not seek to attract their attention by droning cries for alms. If any one had stopped to look, he would have read despair in the man's eyes, as well as starvation in his white face and abject poverty in the torn remnants of leather that hung about his feet, and the gaping holes in a tunic far too thin to be a protection against the wind from the river. But no one did look, and Stephanus tasted to the bitter dregs the isolation of defeat.

For this, indeed, was for him the final defeat, the bottom of the hill down which he had been slipping for many months. More than a year ago he had left his native village of Fori Novi in the Sabine hills, cheerfully sure of making his way in Rome. He had chafed under the

monotonous meanness of the little village whose livelihood was drawn from an olive orchard or two, a bit of pasturage for sheep and goats, and a few fields of grain. His own family raised the fodder for the animals that on feast days were sacrificed in the small temple in the public square. In Rome, so it had seemed to him, it would be easy enough to pick up a first job in the large establishments which handled fodder for the vast numbers of animals required in the religious observances of the metropolis. From that he could go on to better things.

But nothing had prospered. He did not seem to know how to deal with city people. His superiors accused him of losing sales—he never could see how. At any rate he lost one position after another. The small store of money he had brought with him from home steadily dwindled. He tramped the Forum and the neighboring streets for work and found none. Having lived at first in a respectable lodging house in the Argiletum, on the advice of a shoemaker's apprentice who had relatives in Fori Novi, he

ended on the top floor of the poorest of the poor tenements near the Circus Maximus. Even for this miserable room, the rent, by Fori Novi standards, was terrifyingly high. He could afford to buy only the coarsest bread, and such oil as well-to-do workmen used for their lamps. But he drenched his cheap cabbage in it and his dog licked it greedily. Sometimes he could afford boiled beans or peas at the stand on the Argiletum corner under the shrine of Vulcan. But he had never gone back there since that dreadful day last March when his dog had been killed by a piece of marble shaken from a passing wagon. A little girl—such a lovely child, with red curls—had been killed at the same time, but the crowd had closed in about her and he had had no heart to stay to hear who she was. He could only slip away, heartbroken and unnoticed, with the crushed body of his little dog in his arms.

After the death of Fidus Stephanus lost even the remnants of his courage. The dog had come with him to Rome, the only part of Fori Novi

that he was not willing to leave behind, and had become the one companion of his adversity. Fidus never loved him less as he grew poorer, never worshiped him less as he lost the respect of other men. In the cruel, indifferent street he always had a little comrade at his heels. In his bleak room he had a little shaggy body pressed close to his when he tried to sleep. Now Stephanus lost his hold. On the few pennies which he occasionally earned he ate less and drank more. The cheapest wine had at least warmed him a little, made him sleep, made him forget. There was no one to care what happened to him. His father and mother were long since dead, he had broken with his brothers on leaving his native village. Stray acquaintances in the city had not tried to keep track of him, as he went from lodging to poorer lodging. In this last wretched tenement everybody was too absorbed in his own squalid struggle for existence to notice one more derelict. For Stephanus there seemed left only such forgetfulness as he could drain from a cup.

To-day marked the lowest stage. Without a penny left he was willing to beg that he might be drunk. He had come to the bridge at a time when the occupations of the day were breaking up and crowds from both quarters of the city were moving back and forth across the Tiber. Cold and weak, with no power of initiative, Stephanus watched them. Workers, chiefly, or those who preyed on any crowd, were abroad at this hour. There were boatmen and lightermen coming from their occupations on the river to seek the evening taverns. There were farmers and dyers, and stone-cutters streaming home from their Transtiberine shops. Scavengers and beggars and vagabonds roamed at will. And Jews from the neighboring Ghetto took the opportunity to hawk about for sale the old hats and shoes they had collected during the day.

It was just after Stephanus had feebly repulsed one of these peddlers who had noticed his bootless condition that he saw suddenly in the crowd an old neighbor from Fori Novi. It was Justus, the most successful man of the vil-

lage, a goat owner who sold skins through the country-side and even once a month carried a supply to Rome. How prosperous he looked, with his long, thick cape gathered close about him, and his head and ears protected by a comfortable hood! Earlier in the autumn Stephanus had recklessly bartered his good country *paenula* for a pot of wine.

Justus's neighbors had always considered his name an appropriate one, for he was conspicuously just and honest in all his dealings. But he had little patience with weakness or failure, judging others by the one standard of successful diligence. There suddenly flashed upon Stephanus, through all his sodden misery, a picture of Justus as he had seen him once, rebuking a goatherd. He had come upon the two men in the olive orchard on the slope of the hill to the south of the village. The shepherd was climbing up from the valley, worn and tired, with an ailing kid across his shoulder. Justus had stopped him and told him sharply what a fool he was to waste his strength over an ani-

mal which was sure to die. Then, walking on with Stephanus, he had talked contemptuously of the lack of sense displayed by the clowns who worked for him. Now through the November gloom Stephanus saw again the silvery green of the olive orchard and the lacey clouds of May so unlike the harsh mood of Justus. At the time he had been indifferent, but now that cold voice, impatient with weakness in any form, cut through his mere physical misery and stupor to the vital place where some shred of self-respect had still been left.

Justus passed on, leaving him to the deadly assault of shame. No longer could wine have offered him any comfort. He wanted a deeper forgetfulness. It would take but a minute to plunge into the river there below. When the ripples had closed over his head, no mark whatever from his poor existence would be left upon the life around him. He moved nearer to the coping of the bridge and bent over as if listening to a call from the muddy waters.

Just at that moment, he felt a hand on his

arm, and heard a warm voice saying cheerfully, "Brother, come with me." He looked up in amazement to find near him a young man, a stone-cutter to judge from the kit of tools he carried, with smiling, shining, brown eyes and a persuasive sweetness lingering on the lips that had spoken such friendly words. The young man slipped his arm through his, turning him gently into line with the stream of people pouring eastward. "It is so cold," he said, "and you haven't a cloak on. You look tired, and I have an idea that you have not eaten for some time. I am just on my way to a house where there will be a fire and food and a chance to rest. You will be most welcome. Do keep me company. I shall enjoy it more if you come too."

Stephanus had neither the power nor the wish to resent this gentle urging. Almost as Fidus used to follow him, he followed this stranger, without questioning the mastery.

Just after they came off the bridge, the stranger turned abruptly to the right into a

street occupied by comfortable looking shops and houses. Even though the houses were in blocks of two or three together they were fairly large. At one of them the stranger knocked and almost immediately the door opened wide and hospitably. A young boy, acting as porter, smiled happily when Stephanus's new friend patted his shoulder. They passed through a vestibule into a large living room, and a middle-aged man, short and thick-set, hurried forward to meet them. "Felix," he said, putting out both hands, "it is good to see you to-night," and then before Felix could speak, he held out his hand cordially to Stephanus. "And you too, brother," he said, "are very welcome in my house."

Felix, addressing his host as Narcissus, explained very simply that he had found Stephanus alone on the bridge and ventured to bring him where he could find warmth and food. Stephanus himself was in a dream, so many comforting things were happening to him. At a magic nod from his host, the friendly boy came

from the door and took him into an inner room and presently brought him a jar of hot water, together with a clean tunic and a whole pair of shoes, helping his trembling hands to put them on. A pitcher of hot milk and a plate of bread followed, and he was asked to come back into the living room when he had finished eating.

When, clean and steady on his legs again, he entered the *atrium,* he found a group of perhaps a dozen men and women, young and old, gathered about the host, greeting each other as if to meet in this house in this way were a delightful thing. Stephanus was waking from his dream with restored perceptions. He wondered what holiday this was or what family festival. Everybody seemed full of cheerfulness and even of joy. At first, as nobody noticed his entrance into the room, he stood alone for a moment watching their lively faces and thinking that they must be a large family connected by close ties of blood. As he caught a sentence here and there from their conversation, he felt that they shared together the knowledge of some happy

event. He heard the name "Paul" often, as if everybody had seen him lately or was about to see him. He wondered if this Paul had inherited a fortune. He heard one man say to another, "I have hardly been able to wait to see you. It is all true. He gave me the most wonderful proof of it yesterday," and then excitedly they walked off together into a corner of the room. As their movement revealed Stephanus standing back of them, a lovely woman with dark hair parted over a low brow and eyes full of sweetness came forward at once, holding out her hand to Stephanus. "I am Persis," she said, "the sister of Narcissus. We are always so happy when a stranger comes to us. He tells me that he wants you to spend the night here in the room where you have been changing your clothes. You will do it, won't you, and you will come first into our meeting?" "Meeting," Stephanus said, dully, "what sort of a meeting?" "Oh," said Persis, "I thought that Felix had probably told you. Once a week we have a meeting to talk about Jesus Christ." "Jesus

Christ,'' repeated Stephanus, once more perplexed and lost in this strange company. ''Who is he?'' ''Come in here,'' said Persis, putting her hand on his arm and leading him in the wake of the others toward an inner room beyond the living room.

Modest as the house really was, Stephanus had never seen one so large. The *atrium,* where they had been standing near the generous open hearth, ran back into another room more secluded and private. Here seats were placed for about twenty people. A few simple terra-cotta lamps lighted the room in a quiet, subdued way. A larger lamp on a high standard stood by one of the wall spaces. On this wall was painted a picture, and Stephanus saw Felix step aside from the others and go up and stand in front of it, as if seeing with pleasure a familiar object.

''Come and see the picture,'' Persis said. And when Stephanus reached the side of Felix, he saw on the wall the figure of a shepherd holding a kid across his shoulder. The picture was

rudely enough drawn and colored, but that Stephanus did not notice. To him the figure seemed very real, and a lump came into his throat as his mind flew back to Fori Novi. Felix turned with a smile. "I used to see the shepherds so often that way at my grandfather's," he said, "bringing in the lost kids and lambs or the weak and sickly ones. Do you know anything about farm life?" he went on. "Yes," said Stephanus, "I come from the country and my business used to be raising the fodder for the sacrificial animals. There was a man in my village who had big flocks of goats, but he wouldn't allow his men to waste any time over the sickly and worthless." "This is the Good Shepherd," Felix said simply, holding out his hand toward the rude picture. "He picks up and carries himself the kid that is weakest. And, brother," he added quickly, "he never wanted animals sacrificed on an altar. He only wants our own bodies and hearts used rightly as a sacrifice to God."

Other men and women were still coming into

the room, so that the promised meeting had not yet begun. The cheerful hum of their voices as they greeted each other made it possible for Felix and Stephanus to talk together without being heard. Stephanus found the things that Felix was saying too incomprehensible to answer. But, feeling toward him an impulse of confidence because of his kindness, he said, "I never had any special feeling for flocks and herds, but I loved my dog very much. He was killed in the Argiletum last March. Such a little fellow," he added with a catch in his throat, "the only friend I had left." Felix turned quickly. "Tell me," he said abruptly, "were you buying beans that day at the stand by the shoemaker's under the shrine of Vulcan? Did you see a little red-haired girl run out in the street after your dog? Were they struck together by a piece of marble?" "Yes," Stephanus said hoarsely. A strangely still look came over the face of Felix. He put both hands on the other man's shoulders and said to him very gently, "The child was mine. I was in great

darkness after I lost her. Then the light came to me and I learned to know that Jesus Christ has conquered death. I am sure that it was meant that you and I should meet sometime. My little girl loved everything that was weaker than herself, and I think that she was trying to save your dog when she ran out into the street. For her sake, will you come and sit beside me now and open your ears and let the seed that falls to-night find a good soil in your heart?''

There was no time for Stephanus to answer, for a quiet hush fell upon the room. The two men slipped into chairs near the picture of the Good Shepherd, and Narcissus rose to speak to the little group of eager listeners.

Later Stephanus understood that the presence of himself, a stranger among them, led Narcissus to speak as he did about certain things which the rest might have taken for granted. At the time he was simply drawn as if by an invisible tide toward the story of Jesus Christ, who had worked with his hands as a carpenter, who had believed that men should live

together like brothers and friends, who had not been nearer to emperors and senators than were any of them sitting there in that room, who had come to found a Kingdom of God in which the poor were as important as the rich, the weak as welcome as the strong, who had come to raise men up just when they were lowest.

As Stephanus listened, an amazing thing befell him. It was as if a secret door opened in his heart, and there walked in a companion who would never desert him, who cared supremely whether he fared well or ill, whether he did right or wrong. He understood these men and women around him because they had the same friend. For love of this friend they had welcomed him and warmed him and clothed him and fed him. He could never despair again because never again would he be alone in defeat. Hope for to-morrow began to flood in upon his arid will. If he had been like a crippled kid, at least now his limbs would heal and strengthen. His manhood rose to meet the new value of his life. He had been sought by Jesus Christ.

PHILIP was the son of a shoemaker living in a large tenement house a few blocks above Felix and Priscilla, and, at twelve, was the oldest of ten children. His name came from his paternal grandfather who had been a Greek freedman. From him also perhaps the boy had inherited his quick intelligence and sensitive perceptions. On his mother's side he was all Roman, with a bent toward conscientiousness and industry He was a favorite with Dento, the fashionable pearl merchant on the Via Sacra, in whose shop he had already for a year been setting stones with conspicuous skill. Because of the steadily increasing brood of brothers and sisters he had been forced out to work very early. His father and mother, care-worn and absorbed in making both ends meet, had little time for the softer ways of affection. Of home life the children knew nothing, crowded into two poor rooms, on

the eighth floor of the huge tenement. Shelter and food and clothing, even of the scantiest, were the sole objects of endeavor. Philip might never have known his more prosperous neighbors, if Charinus, the Greek bookseller, who had a decent bachelor's room on the second floor of the same tenement, had not singled him out for attention and introduced him to Felix's household. Little Agatha at once, with a child's swift instinct, had attached herself to the boy, and he in turn utterly capitulated to her confidence and baby charms. In her house and with her father and mother he found the home for which unconsciously his young heart was starving.

Agatha's death, and his discovery of her broken little body in the arms of a stranger in a strange crowd had been a shock to his whole nature. Grief and horror mingled in his thoughts. At night he had terrible dreams; by day, without knowing it, he became the prey of all the destructive impressions which lurked in his harsh routine. Before sunrise he had to

crawl out of the bed he shared with three younger brothers, snatch a piece of dry bread to eat on his way, and plunge into the greedy company of those who were setting in motion another day's life for the great city. Bakers calling out their fresh loaves, loud-mouthed shepherds, in from the country, peddling their goat's milk, sausage-sellers opening up their smoking corner stands, butchers hurrying along with quarters of beef and raw, disgusting guts and lungs—all were screaming and struggling to get ahead of everybody else, to be the first to mulct the early purses. When he reached the upper ridge of the Via Sacra, where the more elegant shops were situated, the preparations were as jealous if less noisy. On Dento's side of the street the jewelers and goldsmiths, on the opposite side the florists and perfumers were setting out their luxurious wares. Dento's cynical, if good-humored, materialism pervaded his shop. Pearls from the islands of strange seas, emeralds from northern mountains, all the shining gems from far-off Asia were valued only in

so far as they might extract money from the rich, who, in their turn, seemed oftenest to buy for the sake of display. Dento's fashionable customers seemed to Philip to have faces and voices and manners as hard as the coins they bartered for the jewels which he found so beautiful. His delight in the materials which he handled had to be concealed from the ruder commercial touch of his fellow-workers. At night, tired and depressed, he avoided Victor and the other boys, saw Agatha's little white bleeding face at every dusky corner, and at home crawled into bed, after a supper of coarse porridge, to wake fitfully at the passing of the rumbling wagons.

Of Felix and Priscilla in these months Philip saw very little. At first they had tried to keep kind hands stretched out to him, but in his bruised alienation from all his usual life he fell apart from them also. When he had chanced to see them, through the spring and summer, he found in them a mysterious serenity. It almost angered him that they were not more

broken by Agatha's death. And yet he could not but sensitively respond to a new beauty in Priscilla. He had always loved her sparkling face and wavy hair and cordial, pretty ways. Now he recognized, without understanding, a new and deeper kindness.

Perhaps this drew him, as it drew many who needed a gentle ministry. Priscilla could not go about much because of her baby, but day by day she grew lovelier in her own home and among her friends and neighbors. At any rate, when November came, and a problem pressed hard upon young Philip, he came straight to the only home he had known. It was after supper, and he found Felix gone. No, Priscilla explained, it was not a guild night, he had gone to another kind of meeting with some new friends—she would have gone too, but had not been able to get Delia to stay with the baby, and now she was glad she had been kept at home if she was to have Philip all to herself. The sweetness of her manner lured Philip into confidence. He began to tell her how his father

was ordering him to find evening work, they were so poor and the winter was going to be a hard one, and he didn't know where to look for a job, and that very night the littlest children had been hungry—and— But the boy was very tired, and suddenly burst into nervous tears. He flung his arms across the table and put his head down on them. Priscilla heard him say, "I don't see how you bear it, I don't see how you bear it." She knew that his very confidence in her had brought a sudden thought of Agatha—Agatha who was always nestling in her own thoughts and love. She sat in silence until his sobs stopped shaking him. Then she went and brought a bowl of water and cooled her hand and put it on his neck close up under his black curls, and lifted his face from his arms, and softly stroked his forehead where it ached so above his eyes.

Then she talked to him in her sweet, soft voice. She told him the story of Jesus Christ who made it certain that Agatha still lived, and whose love could help each one of them to be

brave and patient. And as Philip listened he felt rested and happy, as he did some days in the spring when the city fountains began to play again, and the water leaped and sparkled like crystals in the sun, and on the marble balustrades were heaped up great mounds of sweet-smelling violets and roses.

Then Felix came home and was so kind and strong. Priscilla stretched out her hand to draw him close and said simply, "We were talking of Jesus Christ," and he slipped his arm around her shoulder and smiled at Philip and said, "Believe all she tells you, my boy." But Priscilla said no more about this strange, new thing, and Philip was glad, because he was shy of its mysterious beauty. Instead, she began to do familiar, pleasant things, bringing out bread and cheese, and making a hot drink. And, with a start from her, it was easy for Philip to tell Felix about his problem of how to find more work. Victor, he said, had suggested looking for a wine-boy's job in one of the Subura taverns that were open all night. It would mean

a rough life and hard hours, but he could stand it for the sake of the money. Felix went over to the hearth and whispered a moment to Priscilla, who was lifting the steaming pot from the red coals. When he came back he said, "Let me find you a place, Philip. I will have one for you by to-morrow evening." The boy could find no words, but his wonderful friends seemed to understand. He drank his hot water and wine in a maze of happiness, body and mind revived and comforted.

And that was how Philip became the evening porter at the door of the House of the Good Shepherd. He had been there a week when Stephanus was brought in by Felix. Narcissus and Persis, whose kindness won his ardent allegiance, were already watering the seed planted by Priscilla. The work that Felix was helping them to do revealed to him the meaning of their love for the compassionate Shepherd of whom they talked. With all the delicate intensity of his nature, Philip entered into the ministry of the household.

But this same nature led him to receive a further influence from another lover of Jesus Christ. It came, on the evening of Stephanus's arrival, from Lucius who had called to walk home with Felix. As Felix was not yet ready to leave and as Philip was being sent off by Narcissus, who never allowed him to stay over hours, he said that he would accompany the boy for a few blocks. The young charm of this protégé of Felix had, on several occasions, attracted his attention, and he seized the opportunity to know the boy better. Emerging from the house they found that the rain had stopped, and that here and there, amid the scudding clouds, stars were shining. Philip talked eagerly. He told Lucius about Stephanus and his dog, and the wonder of Felix finding just him, and the happiness of Felix and Narcissus, because Stephanus had seemed really to listen at the evening meeting. They were planning to find him work and keep him a good and honest man. "It is what Jesus would have done, isn't it?" the boy added—his shyness lost in the tide

of understanding that had flooded in upon him. "Yes," Lucius said, "he would have given him food and drink and warmth and the hope of work. And then he would have given him a star, too." In the darkness the boy could not see the man's tender, whimsical smile, but his quick ears caught the sudden shift of phrase. The stars always fascinated him. He never failed to peer for them above the narrow streets, however oppressively the upper stories of the houses interfered with the upward glance. He had never been too tired to seek their jeweled gleam. What, then, did Lucius mean by saying that Jesus could give to you a star?

They had reached the corner where they were to separate. Lucius stopped by the shrine of Mercury, which marked the crossing of the thoroughfares, and leaned his head back to look up into the sky, by this time wind-swept and star-strewn. "They are beautiful after this gloomy day, aren't they?" he said. "I saw your eyes go straight up to them when we came out of the house." And then he held out his hand

to Philip. "Good-night, little brother. The love of God is like that, mysterious and yet real, just as the stars are. Stephanus needs it, we all need it as much as we need food or warmth. Jesus found it and offers it to us. I think he was already looking for it when he was a boy like you. Good-night, again. Peace be with you—and joy in believing." His voice seemed to linger in kind cadences as he pressed the boy's hand, and turned away.

And that was how Philip, with a child's clarity of vision, on the very evening that had most clearly revealed to him the compassion of Love, caught sight also of its starry reaches. From that evening there began for him a new inner life. His outward routine was the same, but within he was conscious all through the day of help and comfort and guidance. Listening eagerly to the many stories about Jesus Christ, he had picked out from them things almost lost upon his elders. To him the boy Jesus became a living reality. This boy had known what it was to work and make things with his hands—to

help his mother—to be the oldest son of a growing family. He must often have been tired, and yet he found time, too, to try to learn more about God—once he had even forgotten his family in order to study and learn about the business of his Father in Heaven. This boy was with Philip when he hurried out of bed before the dawn, when he bent over his instruments in Dento's shop, when he received harsh orders from irritated customers, when he made his way through the selfish, noisy crowds, when he served Narcissus as best he could, when he slipped into bed again and laid his head down for a few hours of sleep beside the tousled heads of his little brothers.

And somehow nothing seemed as hard to him as it used to seem. He noticed all sorts of cheerful things. His little sister was growing to be almost as pretty and sweet as Agatha. Among the early crowds in the streets there were, after all, kindly happenings—one morning the cross-looking sausage-seller at the corner of Cæsar's Temple actually lost a sale be-

cause he stopped to help a clumsy shepherd reload his donkey. In the shop the workman just above him expressed pleasure in the red brilliance of rubies. More than once a grand lady spoke gently to her maid. And on the next holiday, when the shop was closed in honor of the erection of a new statue of Mercury, the tutelary patron of the district, he found that Victor and the other boys did want him to play ball with them, and take his old place in the band of "Eaglets."

Indeed, the Eaglets—as boyishly grandiloquent as senators' sons—welcomed Philip back with enthusiasm. His depression during the past months had puzzled them. But now a freshness of spirit, although unanalyzed, peculiarly attracted them. Always popular, he became more and more the acknowledged leader among these warm-hearted comrades. And what the boys felt for him was felt more consciously by those who were older. His mother was teased out of her anxieties into soft ways with him, and his father spared time for an oc-

casional word of praise. Dento made no secret of his partiality. Charinus took a frank pleasure in his enlivened intelligence and his blitheness. Felix and Priscilla, Narcissus and Persis watched his boyish good living with proud affection. Lucius alone, perhaps, sometimes saw his young face shine with an inner light and understood that he grew in favor with others because he had found for himself the bright, the morning star.

IN THEIR AFFLICTION

I

"Five hundred denarii at the very least," the Syrian insisted, keeping a proprietary finger on his engraved gem. Dento's face, usually good-humored and smiling, sharpened and grew crafty as it always did when Echion came in with wares to sell. The object which he was showing to-day was a quaint amulet in the form of an elliptical piece of onyx, engraved with the figure of Juno the Savior clad as she was worshiped by peasants at Lanuvium in a goatskin and accompanied by a serpent. This native costuming was what gave value to the small object, since usually the deities on such gems wore conventionalized Greek dress. The engraving itself, as Dento had been protesting, was a very ordinary bit of work. He spoke with the knowledge of a craftsman as well as a buyer. His own engraving on gems—chiefly portrait heads

—was of recognized excellence. He had just finished, on a beautiful piece of sardonyx, a surprising likeness of his only son, a boy of eight, with a straight Greek nose, and heavy soft hair brushed down over the ears, and a lifted chin pushing out the upper lip in a characteristic expression of gay defiance.

But Echion waved aside the criticism of the workmanship, going back with the sure instinct of his trade to the rarity of the subject which would be sure to tempt some rich dilettante collector. He made his living by ferreting out jewels and similar heirlooms among people who had come down in the world and whose poverty and ignorance of values made them easy victims of Echion's cleverness. Dento knew perfectly well that the owner of Juno the Savior had been lucky if she had brought him in even fifty denarii. But he also knew that he could sell the odd jewel again for a thousand. Echion slipped up in not realizing the prices accepted by the rich. While this made the merchant willing to concede a large profit to the middle-man

on his own transaction, the son of a Greek had no intention of letting a Syrian off with his first demand. "Three hundred," he repeated, laying his hand open on the counter.

Philip came in from the work-room with an inquiry about a pair of earrings made up of amethysts and topazes ordered by the beautiful young wife of Calpurnius, one of their best customers, but he slipped out again without putting the question. A shudder always came over him when he ran into Echion—he knew too well how he got the objects which he brought to Dento. Only yesterday he had seen him coming down from the attic at the very top of his own tenement in the Argiletum, the attic that was occupied by a poor widow and her crippled son. The woman had come from Ostia and had evidently seen better days. His mother had gone up one day, when she heard the little boy was sick, and had been much impressed by a silver saltcellar standing on the rickety table in the room which even to her seemed barren and miserable. Philip's eye now caught a glimpse

of the gem in its quaint old setting, and he went out, thinking of the widow's white, thin face, and of the hump on her child's back which always made his throat ache when he passed him on the staircase or saw him huddled up against the wall of the house seeking the sun on these chilly December days.

Dento and Echion went on with their bargaining. It grew sharper and more intense. Racial rivalries egged them on. They watched each other like lynxes.

But suddenly a slave rushed through the door and up to Dento without ceremony. "Oh, Dominus," he said, "quick, quick, come home, the little master is terribly sick. Domina has sent me to get you." Dento's outstretched hand drew back like lightning from the amulet of Juno Sospita and went up to his throat. His face had turned quite white. His eyes, but a moment ago so keen and cold, looked hunted and afraid. He spoke hardly above a whisper as he said to the slave, "Go, I will follow at once." He shook his head protestingly as

Echion attempted some word of sympathy. He turned to the clerk who was sitting at a desk near by and gave a few quick orders. Philip, going to the narrow window of the work-room for more light, saw his master fairly run out into the street, throwing on his cloak as he went, and unaccompanied by the slave who usually walked in front of him. Dento did himself well and took pride in observing the fashions of the successful.

II

The child's room was full of every luxury that could be devised for the only son of prosperous, comfort-loving parents. On the walls were gay pictures representing his favorite stories. The colors were vivid, so that even in the dull light of a late afternoon they held the eye. Here was the "Argo" sailing out on a very blue sea, headed for the Golden Fleece. Here was Hercules with a huge club in one hand and a tawny dead lion flung nonchalantly over the other

shoulder. Here was the beautiful, golden-haired Andromeda chained to a jutting cliff on the seashore, and Perseus, armed with the Gorgon's snaky head, flying swiftly to her rescue on purple and silver wings. On the mosaic floor, laid in small black and white squares, were placed at strategic points the bright Oriental cushions and tapestries designed for chairs but used here for the comfort of bare little feet. The bed was heavily veneered with ivory and tortoise shell. In one corner of the room was a chest, standing open and filled with a careless collection of expensive tops and hoops, and balls of many colors. A box of agate marbles marked the acme of luxury. Most boys had to play with nuts. But all these things were of no avail this afternoon for the boyish master of the room who on his luxurious bed turned and tossed in restless fever. His mother cowered in a big ornamental chair, whimpering ineffectively, her elaborate coiffure looking oddly out of place as the tears streaked her rouged and powdered face. The nurse with surer hand tried to keep

the coverlets over the child, and to put on his forehead cloths wrung out of snow water. He had not seemed well for several days, and had complained of his throat and head, but they had thought it was only a cold. Within the last few hours, however, so the mother told Dento in answer to his rough questioning, he had grown rapidly worse. The fever seemed to have him in its grip. Yes, they had sent for the doctor, but he had not been at home. They could only leave a message for him. They had no idea when he would get back. Dento paced the room violently, and then, recalled to the bedside by a choking sound in the child's throat, sank upon his knees, feeling for the little hot hands.

The boy was the centre of Dento's life. It swept over him now, in a gust of despair, that he had nothing else to live for. His wife was a fool, a fine figure to adorn with silks and jewels, but of no further use to him. She had not wanted to bear more children after the first one, and he had dismissed the domestic situation with a contemptuous shrug. He had no

particular yearning himself for children, and as for women, there were plenty whose smiles he could buy without loading himself up with responsibilities. Women anyway were fit only for hours of recreation. A man's business was the thing that counted. He was a Greek by blood although his family had lived in Rome as citizens for two generations, and the commercial talents of his race had found excellent scope in developing the jewelry business inherited from a more conservative father. At thirty-five he was making money fast. He liked the game, he liked the sense of growing power, and he liked also, much more even than his father would have liked, the actual things that his money could buy. He enjoyed collecting ornate furnishings and adding to his staff of slaves. He stocked his cellar with the better wines, and wanted on his table imported delicacies and the finest cuts of meat. He liked to see his wife more richly dressed than any of her friends. He wanted his boy to live as well as any senator's son.

Ah, but here with his little son there had come

to be a difference! Everybody, everything else was but a lay-figure to show off Dento's own success or to furnish him amusement. But this eight-year-old boy had brought love to life in him. Never had the father so realized it as now, in this hour, when he came abruptly up against an anguished fear. He seemed to have no power left in him. He was unused to sickness and had no idea what to do. Tales rushed through his mind of sick children—every dreadful disease seemed to begin with a sore throat and an unnaturally hot body. And sick children always died. He could not remember hearing of one who came down with a fever and lived. His hands grasped the child's hands frantically. He could not, could not let him be sick. Would the doctor never come? Rage seized him that the fellow should have been away when he was needed here and now. Could he trust a servant to find another doctor? He did not know what to think or where to turn. Fear held him in a vise.

He did not hear the door open and was sud-

denly startled by the voice of Philip. Although the young craftsman was his favorite in the shop, he had never invited him to his house, and rose now prepared angrily to dismiss him. But Philip came up to him swiftly, and put out his hand, with his heart in his eyes. "Dominus," he said, "forgive me. But I know somebody who can make the little master well immediately. Won't you let me go and seek him? He is a good man and will surely come." Dento gave one look into the boy's eager eyes, and then grasped his shoulders and whirled him toward the door. "Go," he said fiercely, "promise him any price he wants. Get him here quick."

III

Philip hurried along the crowded streets in the gathering dusk, back from the Viminal hill, where Dento lived, to the Via Sacra. In crossing the Forum he had to steer his way through heavy vehicles which were starting out before the legal hour for their night traffic. One of

them contained an invoice of marble statues being sent from the Transtiberine workshops to the retail shop where people with more money than taste, especially magnates from little towns in the provinces, would buy them for market-places or for their own new villas. They stood upright in packings of straw, loosely held by rope, and presented an extraordinary appearance which caught the humor of the crowd. As the wagon jolted on the rough cobble stones the head of a Faun, with curly hair and pointed ears, wagged toward the veiled breast of a vestal virgin. A tall and stately Juno, destined for some provincial temple, and recognized by her head dress rising above the straw, kept nodding to a dimpled Cupid. Ribald jests were shouted out by pedestrians. Would they never move on?

Philip was afraid that the man he sought might already have left his shop, but he found him superintending the drawing of the curtains for the night. Painted on them were lyres and flutes, for Festus sold and repaired musical in-

struments. He looked, Philip always thought, as if he was concerned with beautiful things. He was tall and slender, and his hair, of a golden chestnut color in spite of his forty years, was brushed back from a high and noble forehead. His gray eyes were deep set and clean and clear. Philip had once been taken to his home, by Lucius, on a holiday when the shop was closed, and ever since, as he opened the door to the poor and needy at the House of the Good Shepherd, he had been brooding on his hours in that other house known as the House of Prayer. Festus was recognized among the followers of the "new way" as an intimate friend of Paul and as a man of peculiar spiritual gifts. He believed in praying, and to Philip that day he had opened a door into a marvelous world where God and oneself actually knew each other. Even in the House of the Good Shepherd prayers were very different from those Philip had learned in his earlier childhood. Among these new ones

there was only one that you could learn—he loved it because Jesus Christ had taught it to his friends and he felt as if the beginning of it, "Our Father," tied him and his Friend close together like brothers. The other prayers he heard from Narcissus at the regular weekly meetings were ways of thanking God for what He had done, and of asking Him to bless them further. Philip liked very much to listen to them, as he liked to hear the Psalms read in Narcissus's alert, clear voice. But, when Festus prayed, stranger things had happened within him. It was as if the walls of the house had disappeared, and the sky had broken in, filled with stars. Lucius had explained to him, going home, that Festus fed the inner man on prayer, that he renewed this inner self day by day by bringing it where God could breathe upon it. And even the outer man sometimes could be affected. Festus had actually healed the sick. This was a spiritual gift granted beautifully to some men and women. "Can you do it?"

Philip had asked in awe. "No," Lucius had answered—sadly, the boy felt—"I am the meanest of the members of Christ's body."

All these things Philip had kept and pondered in his heart, and now in his master's hour of trouble he acted upon them. With catches in his throat, from having run the last stretch of the way when he was once free of the Forum, he told his story in front of the painted flutes and lyres. Festus listened quietly and then said, "Have you faith that the child will be healed?" "Yes," said Philip. "It is enough," said Festus, half under his breath. "Take me to him." And they plunged back into the crowds.

IV

Festus had been sitting at the child's bedside for half an hour. Dento himself had met him at the door of the *atrium* and flung at him the question, "Will you cure my child?" "One who works within me will cure him," the new-comer had answered. "Will you trust me?" Was it

his smile like sunlight through a cloud? Was it his voice so tranquil in its cadence? Was it his eyes like still pools? What was it that calmed the storm in Dento's heart? Fear seemed to fall from him. He put out his hand. "Yes, I trust you," he said.

Now, in the sick room, all was quiet. Festus had laid his hand upon the child's forehead and almost immediately it seemed to bring a coolness that had not been given by the snow water. The little restless body grew quieter, breath came more easily. Festus had sat down by the bed. He had not said anything, and his eyes seemed not to see the sick child in the room, but his face grew beautiful in the eyes of the father and the mother and the nurse as they hung upon it. The boy had fallen asleep and now his breath came quite naturally. Dento put his hand on his forehead and found it soft and cool again. The nurse had lit one or two of the lamps in a place where they could not disturb the child, and the light from them fell in bright spots on the gay cushions. Festus rose. "The

child is well," he said gently. "You will not fear again. Peace be with you." He turned toward the door, but Dento grasped him and swept him back. "You have saved my son," he said in a shaken voice. "What can I do for you? Tell me what you want—gold, silver, jewels, name your own price." Festus looked at him silently for a moment. Then a smile illumined his face and rippled in his deep gray eyes. "The spirit is like the wind," he said, "it cannot be bought with silver or with gold. For myself it is enough to have been about my Master's business. You I am thankful to leave at peace about your child." With a courteous gesture he again turned to go. But a question shot swiftly from Dento's lips: "Who is your Master?" "Jesus Christ," said Festus, his head lifted in a sudden proud movement. "Where is he?" Dento flung back. The eyes of Festus grew penetrating. They swept the luxurious room, the soft furnishings, the child on his bed of ivory and tortoise shell, the mother in her rose-colored silken garments and silver-

laced sandals. Then they turned back to the prosperous owner, and once more a smile came into them. "Seek him where the widow and orphan are," he said with a tender lilt in his voice. "For you he will be there." He left swiftly, in spite of Dento's outstretched hand.

In the hushed and happy room a little child slept quietly. The women talked to each other in low whispers, as the servant bathed her mistress's forehead with a rare perfume. The terror of the earlier hour seemed as unreal as a nightmare. Dento went out and asked the porter if Philip had left yet. Finding that he was waiting in the servants' hall, he gave orders that he should have some supper and then come to him in the writing-room. There he asked him questions and talked with him until it was time for the boy to go to his night task. No, Philip explained, his work was not in the House of Prayer. But he knew that any guest would be welcome there. Friday evenings, yes, that was when he would be sure to find Festus at home.

V

A week later a crippled child was seeking the sunshine in front of a tall tenement house on the Argiletum. He was too lame to play in the streets with the other children and sat on the pavement propped up against the hard wall. His back ached cruelly to-day but he tried to forget it in watching the boys playing "Camp" with nuts. Three nuts and a fourth on top formed the *castellum,* to be scattered by one throw. Click, click on the pavement went the walnuts and chestnuts. A little girl, with tight black curls and shining black eyes, Philip's littlest sister, tripped up to him and tickled his bare foot, and ran away again squealing with delight. She bumped into a strange man, whom the cripple had never before seen near the tenement—a very rich and elegant-looking man. He picked the child up, lifted her high in the air, and then set her down gently on the pavement, where she gazed at him round-eyed and speechless. An older boy came forward to an-

swer some question he was asking. Then, to the cripple's amazement, the stranger went through their door. His hyacinth-colored cloak was more beautiful than anything the child had ever seen. He must be very grand and great. What could he want here? The boys went on playing with the nuts. A shadow fell across the wall against which he was leaning. He moved, and it hurt him so that he scarcely noticed the hyacinth cloak sweeping out again through the doorway. He was so chilly that he must move again. Everything grew dark before his eyes. And then his mother was there and gathered him up in her arms and he felt tears on her cheek as he put his thin little claw up to touch her. But she kept saying, "The Gods be thanked, the Gods be thanked." Up in their room, holding him in her lap, she told him that they were not going to be hungry or cold any more. The rich gentleman had promised wonderful things. And he had brought back to her her grandmother's amulet which she had sold last week when they were without bread—she

had been frightened ever since. But when she told him that, he had smiled and said, "It isn't for Juno Sospita that I have come." He had spoken strangely anyway, though very, very kindly. When she apologized for the poor room, so cold and mean for such as he, he had said, "But there is something here more precious than gold or silver or jewels." What could he have meant?

Doris looked around at her shabby walls and bare floor, at the tottering table, and the rough bed where she and the child had to sleep together. Did it look different to-day? It seemed to her all at once as if something new were there —new and warm and comforting. Kindness had sought her out and seemed still to linger on, making the dreary shelter lighter and brighter. She sat quietly for some time in unwonted contentment. Then she looked down at the child curled close to her breast, his face resting on the rough woolen of her dress. He had fallen asleep and his face seemed free of pain.

FOR AN HELMET

I

In the little village of Fori Novi on the edge of the Sabine Hills preparations were in full swing for the festival of the Saturnalia. It was December, and the harvests were all stored. The vineyards and fields were brown, the olive orchards were lying fallow until the spring. On the higher mountains farther to the north snow glistened when the sun was bright, but the season was a mild one and no white covering had fallen upon Mount Soracte in the nearer distance. Fori Novi was beautifully situated among the spurs of the limestone hills, where purple shadows filled the hollows, and deep green cypress trees and ilexes, with brighter chestnut groves, varied the silvery olives. Perhaps in the legendary life of seed time and harvest, presided over by the antique Saturn, lurked the origin of this happy god's festival.

To-day it was only the recurring season of happiness and gaiety, when good will prevailed and everybody felt friendly. In Rome great games were being made ready in the Circus Maximus, but even in Fori Novi there was enough to keep people merry. At this one season, even the slaves —the village was by no means without them —were free to dress as they chose and speak as they chose. The hard-working citizens themselves felt no responsibility for their public reputation, but drank in the tavern or played dice with hilarious impunity. People of all kinds, village magnates and their underlings, owners of farms and their goatherds, shopkeepers and blacksmiths and shoemakers, thrifty and poor, old and young, men and women and children thronged the little public square and greeted each other with a "Hurrah for the Saturnalia."

Nowhere were the preparations happier than in the house of Quintus and Sabina. Quintus was the baker of Fori Novi—a man of recognized integrity and of a very cheerful disposi-

tion. His shop was a meeting place for the barter of the village. The pigs that were cured in the neighborhood were brought to him to be sold, and on the linen curtains of the bakery was painted with very red ochre a string of hams in addition to the usual baker's picture in charcoal of six loaves of bread. Dried peas, too, and beans were brought to him to dispose of along with his own wares. Sabina, gifted with practical common sense, was a great help to her husband. He frankly relied upon her shrewdness and accuracy, while she, loving his merry heart and careless laughter, was entirely willing to keep her steadier hand on their little business.

Vesta, of the fire and hearth, was naturally the patron goddess of bakers, and Sabina, at this festival season, was busy preparing special offerings to her. But her whole heart was set on the home-coming of her only boy from Rome. He was a soldier in the Tenth Legion which was to be sent over to Armenia immediately after the Saturnalia. The soldiers had been given one

day's leave of absence from camp, and Florus was expected in Fori Novi early in the morning on the great day of the festival. Sabina knew how he lived when he was in camp—one of ten boys in a tent under a corporal, obliged to grind his ration of wheat for porridge and bread, and to limit himself to such scanty supplies of vegetables and meat as his meagre weekly stipend would allow. The wine furnished to the army was of the thinnest and sourest. How she would love to feed him up on his day at home! She went happily about her work, spicing the sausage meat, roasting two chickens and a whole little pig, making sweet cakes with honey, preparing the best of cabbages and turnips. She found herself crooning a song which she used to sing to Florus at bedtime when he was a child in her arms. Even then he had been a sturdy little fellow with straight back and legs, eager for lively play. To his father and mother it came as a bitter grief when he volunteered for the army, but he himself had taken up a soldier's life with the ardor of active youth. He

was only nineteen now, and had been in the army for a year. For to-morrow's holiday he was going to leave Rome soon after midnight and by sunrise be in Fori Novi. Sabina went to bed that night feeling that she had never before known the happiness of the Saturnalia. It was the holiday on which families and friends exchanged presents, and gave each other proofs of affection and kindly thoughts, but for her the great gift was to be the precious time with the best son in all the world.

II

The next morning she was up by lamplight, once more straightening her best coverlet on Florus's bed, scrubbing the already clean hearth, and making the preparations for a gala breaklast. As the sun rose she stood at the door of her low red-roofed, blue-walled house, straining her eyes down the roughly paved village street which at the end suddenly slipped down the hillside into the long white road of the plain

through which pedestrians from Rome must come. There was a flush of rose in the sky and it seemed to fall, too, upon her firm, sensible, well-tanned face. Quintus came out from the bakery rubbing the flour off his hands, shaking back his thick black hair and singing a tune at the top of his voice. Doors in neighboring houses here and there were opening, but the little street was still almost unfrequented when Florus came up into it, as if with the sunlight, and saw his father and mother standing at their doorway. Everything about him betokened a young soldier. The hobnails in his sandals clattered on the stones. Over his tunic he wore a leather jerkin coming down to cover his thighs. In his right hand he held a pike, and across his left shoulder lay a forked stick supporting a tidy bundle. Darting past an early donkey which was meandering down the street laden with panniers of dried grapes, running as if to charge upon happiness, he reached the arms of his father and mother.

The next hour was one of pure delight, the

last merry one that Sabina was ever to know. A warm fire glowed on the hearth of the little living room. Above it hung the shrine of the family Penates, guardians of the household stores, and also, in a small niche, a picture of two "protectors," good spirits watching over the household. Home wrapped them about very closely as they ate their holiday breakfast. After his long walk Florus must have bacon and the best of the village wine, with his father's fresh bread hot from the ovens. How their tongues wagged! Quintus was always interrupting Florus with some good-natured jest or gibe, but Sabina never failed to bring the conversation back to just what he did in camp, and just what he ate and who his friends were, and how soon he would have to start for Armenia. "Not to-day at any rate, Mother," the boy laughed, "let's forget Armenia and devote ourselves to Fori Novi." He reached for the pack which he had carried over his shoulder when he came and, opening it, spilled out the presents he had brought from Rome. For his mother

there was a new terra-cotta lamp, and for his father a wax tablet for the bakery accounts. Nonsense, he had not given up food to buy them —if he had he would have brought something exciting—a monkey, perhaps, to chatter with father or a necklace of red stones for mother from the Via Sacra. His bundle would be ridiculously empty if Stephanus had not filled it up —oh, he must remember to tell them about Stephanus, he was working hard in a lamp factory, and making money. Here was a flute he had sent Quintus, "with an old neighbor's affectionate remembrances," and for Sabina a girdle of red silk. And here, for his brother's small boys, were gaily colored balls stuffed with hair instead of loose feathers. Wouldn't they feel citified and superior!

But this was no time to talk about Stephanus, in spite of the pleasure Quintus and Sabina took in his remembrances and messages. Florus was the centre of their hour. At nineteen he seemed as eager as he had been at nine to discover the surprises they had for him in the tan-

talizing cupboard which always used to be kept locked for a week before the Saturnalia. In the old days when it was opened, the little boy, with eager eyes, would see a bright new cage for his magpie, a spiked collar for his shepherd dog, a blue ribbon with a tiny bell on it for his tamed squirrel, and a small basket of candied plums all for himself. This morning it revealed a good thick cloak to wear over his uniform, soap made at home to tuck into his soldier's pack, and a warm soft gray muffler knit by his mother's roughened hands.

After they had spent a happy time over the presents, Florus helped his mother clear away the breakfast. A basket of figs arrived with the good wishes of their prosperous neighbor, Justus. A tiny girl came in to bring Sabina a jar of special olives from her mother. Round-eyed, she watched Florus and could hardly be enticed to his outstretched hand. Then Sabina told Florus that it was time for him to get ready to go to the Temple with his father for the sacrifices to Saturn. This was a service only for

men. It was understood that she would be cooking the holiday dinner while they were gone. But here a very strange thing happened, which in one sudden savage cleaving, like a lightning flash cutting the skies, smote asunder the peace and happiness of the household. Florus had been sitting stroking his muffler, which his mother had given him, his head bent down over it. Now he rose up in all his slim tallness, with a white and straitened face. He held out his hands appealingly to his mother, but before she could take them he turned sharply to his father. "Father," he said, "I'm sorry, but I cannot go with you to the Temple. I do not believe in our religion any more. I have learned to believe in Jesus Christ, and I should be disloyal to him if I offered sacrifices to Saturn. He has taught us who our true God and Father is. I must obey his teachings even if it breaks my heart not to go with you."

Florus would never mind facing an enemy as much as he minded piercing the hearts of his father and mother with the declaration of a new

allegiance which they could not understand and which they could not share. Quintus did not attempt any further questions or explanations. Hurt in his most sensitive affections, he simply turned away, and went out alone and lonely into the holiday crowds thronging toward the little temple. Religious observances belonged to life as he knew it. Not vital to him in themselves, they were entwined with all that was vital and familiar. He had contributed this year an especially large sum to the expenses of the sacrifices as a thank-offering because his son would be with him. At home Sabina tried to learn from Florus something that would make his strangeness more comprehensible, but it all grew only more mysterious to her. A prisoner of the Prætorian Guards in Rome was preaching about Jesus Christ who had come to help men, just as a shepherd takes care of his sheep. From the Guards the news had spread to other soldiers. Florus himself had heard it only a month ago, but he felt sure that it was true, and it had filled his life with joy. One day he had met

Stephanus, when the two were buying bacon at the same shop, and found that he too believed this new thing. Stephanus, indeed, had been saved by it from poverty and despair. Now he was working in a lamp factory run by a man who was a follower of Jesus Christ. On some of his terra-cotta lamps this merchant was stamping the figure of the Good Shepherd. That was why Florus had picked out a lamp for his mother, he had wanted to tell her what the figure meant, to make both her and his father believe, with him, in a Father in Heaven who could guard them more wisely than Vesta or the Penates or even than Jupiter, and in an elder brother who could teach them how to be courageous—he often needed that—and good and kind and honest.

Florus's young voice fairly trembled with eagerness, but his words fell only unhappily upon his mother's bewildered ears. As the talk went on both realized the impossibility of their minds meeting. By the time Quintus came home all that had been accomplished was for mother and son to recognize sadly the gulf that

had yawned between them, and to try to draw closer together for comfort during the remainder of the day. Quintus fell in with this as if by tacit understanding.

How different the evening of that day was from the morning! When the shadows began to lie deep along the hillsides, Florus once more put on his jerkin and took his pike and bundle and prepared to start for Rome. And from Rome he was to go to Armenia, perhaps never to return. To his father and mother the parting seemed even more terrible than they had anticipated. They could not ask him to pray to the Penates that he would come home again. They could not ask him to make any homely little offerings to the Guardian Spirits of the household. They could not ask him to remember little childish prayers he used to say to Domiduca. They were sending him out into strange lands, into terrible dangers without the guardianship of his gods. Patiently Sabina packed for him in his soldier's kit the muffler and the warm cloak, and such food as she

thought could be kept for the first days of his march. She kissed him on both cheeks, and on his eyes and on his mouth, and clung to him a moment in the doorway. His father with a loud sob kissed him on both cheeks. It was growing dark and they watched him go down the street and heard the nails of his sandals clatter as he passed out of sight.

From the roof of the house at the end of the street a raven suddenly flew down, lighting on the left side of the doorway as Florus disappeared. Sabina's heart almost stopped beating! Under ill omens, unguarded and undefended, her boy had gone.

III

It was in February that Florus fell in battle, and in early March that the news reached Sabina and Quintus through the official channels. His legion had been sent from Rome the week after the Saturnalia, and on the eve of departure he had been made corporal of his mess of

ten. This report of promotion, with his good-bye message of love and devotion, had been brought to them by Stephanus. It had comforted them through the bleak days of winter, and done its part toward healing the wound inflicted by their boy's last day at home. This they could understand, how his intelligence and sobriety and industry had raised him, at an unusually early age, among his fellows. Stephanus had made no reference to the strange things that separated them, but had talked of Florus as a credit to their care and training.

And now, after the devastating news of his death had crashed into the soft loveliness of the spring in Fori Novi, it was again Stephanus who came from Rome to bring them a last message from Florus. In far-off Armenia, on the night before a crucial advance against the enemy, the young corporal had found a chance to write a letter to his father and mother. Entrusted to a loyal private to send forward in case of death, the precious wax tablet had found its way from hand to hand, finally reaching a

soldier-friend in Rome who carried it to Stephanus. He brought it to Fori Novi when Quintus and Sabina had dwelt with grief for a pitiless month. The weeks, although few, had exacted a heavy toll from them. Sabina's face, once so alert and vigorous, looked now worn and patient. Quintus, as the lesser of the two, was even more pathetic. Without his ringing laugh and boisterous, happy ways he seemed deprived of personality altogether. In the late afternoon of an April day they were sitting in their doorway, trying to rest after a busy day in the bakery and shop. From their little garden plot came the sweet smell of jessamine. The western sky was changing from blue to amethyst. The village street was full of neighbors, hurrying home, or already sitting in their doorways. Cheerful and noisy greetings were exchanged on every hand. Now and then the bray of some little brown donkey indicated his satisfaction in the end of a toilsome day. A goatherd drove a few goats from door to door, milking them for the housewives. At the end of the street, com-

ing up from the hillside and plain, appeared a pair of heavy, grayish oxen drawing a cartload of dried fodder. And behind them, talking with the driver, came Stephanus. To the surprise of Quintus and Sabina, instead of turning to the right toward the temple, near which his brother lived, he made his way, smiling and waving his cap in answer to many a friendly greeting, directly to them.

Within the house, under the shrine of the Penates, the flickering daylight helped out by the lamp which bore the device of the Good Shepherd, Sabina read aloud to Quintus the last words of their son. They were written almost illegibly, evidently with a rough stilus, but the mother's eyes made them out:

"Florus to his beloved father and mother, greeting.

"I go into battle to-morrow. I cannot sleep because I am thinking of home. The light I am writing by will last only a few minutes, so I must tell you quickly what is in my heart. If I am killed to-morrow, do not be sorry for me.

It will make no difference what happens to my body. The spirit, not the flesh, is life, and the enemy cannot kill it. Jesus Christ, my Lord, was condemned to death and crucified. Those who knew him say that, while he was dying, in his body, on the cross, he gave his spirit into the hands of God, his Father. He was older than I am, but a young man, all the same, and he must have had many reasons for wanting to live. But he had kept doing what was right, and so his spirit was pure, and that is the only real life there is. Since I heard about him, last November, I have tried every day to be like him. Some of the men in the tent here say they do not see how a soldier can try to be like any one who preached peace and love toward everybody. But it seems to me that he meant us to obey the laws. When everybody believes in him the way I do there will not be any wars or any army. But while the army lasts, I believe he would have told me to be a good soldier, obedient and courageous and kind to the boys under me. He has seemed to be near me all the

time. He is here in the tent to-night, and I understand that my body need not live any longer for me to have life. Even if this is sent to you because I am killed, I shall not be dead. I am trying to do what is right, and that is being alive. I am happy. I love you—and I want you to be happy. The spirit—eternal—love."

Even Sabina's eyes could decipher no more. The light must have gone out suddenly, as Florus wrote. But from the battered little tablet, roughly written, a light seemed suddenly to flash into the darkness of the mother's heart. She laid her hand on the lamp Florus had brought her. At home here she had not had ears for his words. But now across the seas, across even the silence of death, she began to hear, to listen. Into her face came the old alertness. Quintus was looking at her with a wondering hope. She turned to him and held out her arms as if to gather in and heal his broken will. "Dear", she said—"dear heart, somebody took care of him, after all. Was it Jesus Christ?"

NOT TO THE FLESH

I

April was abroad in the city, and to-day—the first of the Floralia, the Feast of Flora—the curbstones were spilling over with flowers brought in from the country to sell to the holiday throngs. Wisps of white cloud scarcely flecked the brilliant blue sky. The sun tipped with gold the roof of the Capitol and lighted on the pavements of even the poorest streets to warm the bare feet of happy children as they danced.

Doris was taking her little son out to see the sights early in the morning before the crowds should become too dense for a cripple. He had grown so much stronger since December, thanks to plenty of porridge and goat's milk and eggs, that he could walk some distance with enjoyment. The hump on his back was still there, but his big black eyes had lost their look of misery,

and the fingers which clutched his mother's were round and warm with added flesh. Doris, through Dento's help, had obtained steady employment as a repairer of fine embroideries in a costumer's shop on the Vicus Tuscus which led from the Forum to the Circus Maximus, and was able to hire two rooms in a decent lodging house near by, run for respectable working people.

The goal of their walk this morning was the great Circus where later in the day games were to be held. On a corner near a shrine of Venus they stopped to look at some big baskets of flowers just lifted from the brown backs of four little donkeys by a couple of mischievous village boys who seemed quite oblivious of the scolding tongue of the older man in charge of them. Doris's boy, in his delight, let go her hand and ran nearer to the fragrant stores. The smell of acacia mingled with that of jessamine and syringa. Yellow and deep red roses rioted over the edges of the baskets. Rose-colored laurel, white pinks and purple gilly flowers lurked be-

hind them. Even so late in April there were scarlet and pink geraniums and heliotrope and a few tardy bunches of narcissus. Doris lingered almost as if in a trance. The fragrance and the color swept her memory back to her grandmother's garden in Fori Novi where she used to make a visit every spring in her childhood and as a growing girl, when she lived at Ostia. To go from her seaport home to the little village in the hills had always fascinated her. At home she could see the ships come in, their sails billowing or flapping according to the weather, and run down to watch unloaded upon the long wharves bales of silks and linens from the East, crates of fruit from North Africa, and, more exciting because really open to the eye, wet baskets of bright-scaled fish from their own sea. But in Fori Novi the sky line ran unevenly above encircling hills and white roads curled on and on toward their soft blueness. Instead of the songs of the sailors you heard soft calls of the lambs in the hillside pastures, and instead of the steady salt smell from the open

sea you caught a fleeting perfume from the bean-fields in blossom below the olive orchard on the low green hill to the south of the village. There was no water at all except the silvery stream which filled the fountain in the square and whose source you could visit on a long day's picnic, if you followed here and there bright little cascades falling over rocks covered with moss and maiden-hair fern.

Doris bent lower over the narcissus in the baskets on the city pavement. Her grandmother's old-fashioned garden had pathways edged with soft green grass, and from the grass in early April nodded blossoms of white narcissus with their yellow centres. She could remember, as if they all grew together in one April week, beds of pinks, and purple iris glowing in the sunshine, and blue periwinkle and reddish camellias. Along the grassy path, set with big flat stones that led to the well-house, there used to be masses of heliotrope and mignonette.

The old well-house! What a delight it had been to her and her cousin, Marcus, and his

bosom friend, Florus, son of the baker in Fori Novi, when she was a lively lanky girl of fourteen inventing games and leading the ten-year-old boys and their playmates in her train! It had been the Roman headquarters when they played Hannibal and Fabius—a difficult game because nobody wanted to be the Carthaginian army. And it had served as a temple in the market-place when they played the Sabine Women. The well-curb made an excellent altar and she would let herself be dragged away from it by Marcus and Florus, only to wrest herself free outside and trip them up in the heliotrope bed, with screams of laughter. How beautiful their childhood had been! The intervening sorrows seemed to remove it as far from her real life as if it had been the Golden Age of the old bedtime stories. Rome had laid a savage grip upon her, which had loosened only within a few short months. She wondered how Marcus and Florus had fared in the city. She had heard from her grandmother of their arrival, but had had no heart to seek them out. And after her

grandmother's death every tie seemed broken. Both boys, she believed, were in the army. She did wish she could see her cousin again! Even as a little boy he had been fascinating to watch with his rich coloring and straight slender shoulders and teasing smile. Everybody loved him, while he himself seemed to love only Florus. In Florus there was a certain steadfastness, almost austere, which held and dominated the more volatile nature of his comrade. Was that still true?

But a rollicking ditty in a warm baritone voice called Doris back from her dreams with a start. Other early pedestrians began to stop for flowers. Two youths, who had evidently already begun to celebrate Flora with wine, bought a garland of red roses and flung it over the small image of Venus on the neighboring shrine, with ribald jests about her part in a festival dedicated to fertility. Doris's little boy was bending over another basket of roses, drawing up every bit of perfume that he could from their delicate pink hearts. Unwrapping her purse,

she took out a penny to buy him the littlest bud, and hurried him on.

II

The day, forgetting a fairer dawn, went its feverish, licentious way. In the afternoon there were gladiatorial games in the Circus Maximus, and, had Doris known, it was here that she might have seen Marcus, playing a modest part in the business of the festival. He had, indeed, been in the army with Florus, but before their regiment was sent to Armenia he had been mustered out because of defective eyesight. His musical skill, however, had attracted favorable notice, and he was placed in a corps of trumpeters in the public service. One item of their work was giving the signals for the opening of the successive chariot races or gladiatorial combats in the Circus. To-day for the first time at the Floralia Marcus was occupying this post, and the riotous hilarity of the scene fairly immersed him. It was the fashion at this particu-

lar festival for men and women alike to wear parti-colored clothes which made the restless arena look like a vast flower-garden blown by the wind. According to an old custom, hares and goats, suggestive of fecundity, were let loose to scurry through the arena, to the boisterous delight of the populace. Beans and lupines, and also little metal discs engraved with bold words and symbols were scattered up and down the rows of seats. Awnings had not yet been put up over the Circus as the season had been a late one, and the light and unexpected warmth beat down upon the crowds, whose blood was already heated with wine and excitement. A certain wildness seemed to be rife in the very combats, in spite of the watchfulness of the trainers. Since Marcus had been made a trumpeter for the games his favorite gladiator had been Theodotus, one of the *retiarii,* or fighters with the net, who, unarmed and almost nude and slight in build, met the big and heavy fighters, fully clothed and fully armed with helmet and shield and sword. The chief pleas-

ure of the combat lay in the paradoxical surprise—the pigmy almost always conquered the giant. It was only a matter of method and time. But to-day even the rules of brutality seemed to be in abeyance. The unexpected happened as if in a general welter of spring madness. When Theodotus met his last opponent, his net failed to enmesh its victim and the heavier man with a sword-thrust pierced the unprotected throat. Shouts of surprised delight came from the tiers of seats. The red blood of Theodotus trickled to the feet of Marcus, and the trainer who hurried forward with attendants to remove the dead body bumped against him. The boy felt sick for a moment, but braced himself for the signals of the next series of combats. It was the hour of sunset before the last victor and vanquished had glutted for that day the holiday greed of the people.

Now it was evening. The sky sparkled with a million points of light up between the high buildings. The narrow streets were lighter than usual because bands of youthful merry-makers

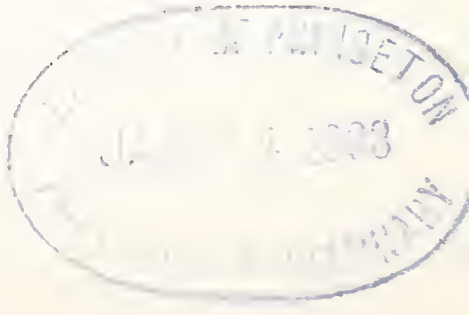
swaggered along everywhere, brandishing their torches. Marcus had come, as he had been doing every night for several months past, to a tavern in the Subura, which had the most indulgent host and the best wine and the best food in the whole lusty neighborhood. The room was grimy with the constant smoke from the fire at the end where the cooking was done. The guests were seen through a bluish haze, punctured by yellow spots of light from sputtering lamps. From the door Marcus was summoned with a medley of whistles over to a group of pantomimes with whom he had made friends during the last week. They were a strolling troupe from the provinces and had turned up in Rome at a holiday season, hoping for an engagement at one of the lesser theatres. He took a chair at their long table and ordered a drink, scarcely noticing the familiar scene. Yet it was a picturesque one and evidently entertained a party of ladies and gentlemen at a small round table near the door—fine folk in search of novelty, who had come down from the Palatine and

the Esquiline to savor the license of a popular tavern. At a table near by were gathered several gladiators temporarily free from training as they were not on the lists for this festival. Big among them sat Crispinus, the popular idol, who had had Rome at his feet during the earlier and greater April games in honor of Cybele. It was whispered that Nero had composed a pæan to him in the Pindaric manner. A great many corporals and sergeants from the barracks were in the room, and little shopkeepers from the neighborhood. There were girls with rouged faces and dyed hair, obeying hints from a middle-aged woman with sharp eyes and pudgy hands and a good-humored mouth. Boys were running about serving beans and lentils, slices of ham and goose liver, hot sausages, raw onions, and pitchers of Sabine and Falerian wine.

Marcus tossed down his third cup of Sabine as a handsome girl, bizarrely dressed, with long black eye-lashes and glossy black hair, slipped onto the arm of his chair. He put his arm about

her and swung her to his knee. She whispered in his ear and he nodded. Two of the pantomimes started a drinking song and the girl jumped up, drew from her scarlet sash a small tambourine, and began to dance in and out among the crowded tables, her white arms gleaming, her yellow draperies flashing through the smoky haze. Everybody—even the aristocrats by the door—began to beat out the measure with their hands. The actors sprang from their seats and danced after the girl, one of them snapping Spanish castanets. Under cover of the general confusion a man slipped into one of the chairs left empty beside Marcus, and the boy felt a hand laid upon his shoulder. Turning nervously he saw Sertorius, the trainer of Theodotus—involuntarily he glanced at his hand to see if it was still wet with blood. It was a large, sinewy hand, befitting a large, powerfully built man, who gave the impression of being in perfect physical condition. His face was hard and his eyes looked unused to gentle sights. But as they rested on Marcus in his graceful youth,

flushed and quivering with the mood of the hour, they softened surprisingly. "See here, youngster," he said, "don't you know that you are using up all your reserve funds? You ought to live on your interest and not on your capital. Flora and Venus are not the only goddesses in the calendar." Marcus frowned and edged a little away from him, but Sertorius persisted, laying his strong hand across the table and touching the boy's wrist. "I've watched you in the Circus," he said kindly, "and I've seen you here more than once. I don't believe you have a father or an older brother to give you any advice. You know perfectly well what I mean, don't you?" "Yes," said Marcus abruptly, flinging himself about and meeting the man face to face, "yes, I do know what you mean. Your business is to train fighters and, of course, part of your stock in trade is to preach against wine and women and the baths. But we've got to have something in life, haven't we, outside of the job that keeps us alive at all? And what pleasures can a working fellow like



myself buy except the baths, and a bit of drink and a girl to play with?" "Exactly," Sertorius answered, "it is because I think all these things are comforts that I want you to keep the strength to enjoy them for a great many years. I am not telling you to cut them out—women least of all. Leave that for the philosophers. I've led a practical man's life, and expect younger men to do the same, but I believe in conserving our virility. Make the women side-issues, don't use yourself up on them. You are going the pace too rapidly. Come down to the Subura here once a week instead of every night. At any rate go home oftener when the drinking is ended." Marcus looked at him for a few moments in silence. Then he said abruptly, "But why? What is to-morrow to me? I may be dead by then. And when I die I hope they'll put on my tombstone the only sensible epitaph I ever saw: 'I was not, I was, I am not, I care not.' In the meantime, what am I young for except to enjoy it? If I don't care about the future why not drink and love while I can?

Why—*why*—that is what bothers me.'' ''Why?'' Sertorius repeated in slow perplexity, looking like a heavy gladiator surprised by the quick onslaught of his slighter antagonist. ''Well, because we are Romans, I suppose, and that is the way Romans live. We have conquered the world. We don't run to waste as the Greeks do, or the Egyptians or the Cappadocians. Don't you want to act like a Roman?'' The Spanish castanets and tambourines clicked and jingled more wildly. Marcus's eyes followed the whirling scarlet sash, and then turned back to Sertorius. ''I wasn't kept in the army,'' he said sullenly. ''If Mars doesn't want me, Venus can have me.'' Sertorius shrugged his shoulders and rose to go. ''Just as you like, youngster,'' he said, ''it is on your own head. It will be taken out of your own body. I only hated to see such good material wasted. But that is your affair, not mine. Good night.'' Marcus nodded indifferently, as the dancing girl landed in his arms with a final shake of her tambourine.

III

It was early evening of the next day. The sun had just set, leaving gold and amethyst bars across the west, as Marcus walked from the Circus to the music shop of Festus with his trumpet which had been broken in the course of the afternoon's work. In spite of the freshness of the April air, he was feeling languid and tired and was glad that he need not hurry. The shop was kept open on feast days in order to meet just such emergencies as his. And he would find Festus himself who always gave the holidays in full to his apprentices, at the expense of his own freedom. Arrived at the shop he found Festus in conversation with a soldier in a centurion's uniform, and was amazed to hear his own name pass between them. Festus stepped forward with the smile which Marcus always thought the very kindest one in Rome. "This is a happy coincidence," he said. "We were just speaking of you. This is Centurion Aulus Granius, he tells me, of the company of your friend Florus,

just returned from Armenia and looking for you. He has a message for you from your friend who was killed in battle, and who told him that if he came to me I could probably tell him where you lived. You see, Florus knew that I keep your trumpet in repair. Perhaps he knew also how glad I would be to do him or you a service. I met him once. He came to my house on a Friday evening just before the Tenth Legion sailed, and I have never forgotten his face, and the look in his eyes when we said 'good-bye.' Now that you and his centurion have so fortunately met here, won't you go into my inner room and talk? Take all the time you wish. I am not in any hurry to close the shop.'' At the words ''killed in battle'' an icy hand had seemed to grip the heart of Marcus. So Florus was dead. He might have known it. He was, he was not—life came to just that. Dully he followed the soldier into the inner room. They sat down on a bench beside a work table on which lay a lyre with broken strings waiting to be made whole once more. Aulus began his story in a

quiet voice without any excuses. "I have just arrived in Rome," he said, "and am on leave from the barracks for a day. After seeing my mother, I started out to find you, because I promised your friend, Florus, that I would see you as soon as I came back and give you a message from him. He was my friend, too. I grew to love him while we were in the service together, both of us far from home and facing death all the time. As you see, I outrank him, but he was so trustworthy that we were always making use of him in handling the other boys of his age, and so I had considerable contact with him as my subaltern. Sometimes we could talk by the camp fire, and he told me about his mother and father in Fori Novi, and about you who were his best friend there. One night—I shall never forget it—he told me about a new friend, Jesus Christ, who was living only in the spirit, but whom he worshiped as his Lord and Master, trying to obey him as we soldiers are taught to obey those in authority over us. Only a week after this we went into battle, and, when

it was over, I found that he had not been brought in among the wounded. We were in a cold region and the rain was falling heavily, but I called for a few volunteers and after nightfall we went out to hunt for any who might have been left still alive on the battlefield. The order had been issued that the dead should not be buried until the next day. We had routed the enemy and they were supposed to be in full flight, but we thought it quite possible that a few bowmen in the rear might still be lurking about, willing to take a shot at any Romans they saw, so we walked very stealthily, which was easy to do on the oozy ground. In one place I stumbled over a soldier's dead body, lying near a low bush. As I picked myself up I heard a faint sound from the other side, and, going around and putting my lantern down close to the ground, I recognized Florus. Blood was coming from his right side where a spear had pierced him. He was still alive, though very weak, and after I had done what I could do to staunch the blood, and had lifted him against

my shoulder and washed his face and given him water to drink, he opened his eyes and smiled at me. 'Thank you for coming,' he said, and shut his eyes again, and I thought that he was dying. But after a few moments he stirred and straightened himself up a little and began to speak in a voice that was quite clear and distinct. 'Listen, dear friend,' he said—'I may call you that now. I know that this is the end—the end of this body, I mean. I had a strange feeling last night that it would be so, and I wrote a letter to my mother and father. I wanted to write to Marcus, too, but there was not enough oil in the lamp. Promise me that if you reach Rome alive you will go to him and say it for me. You can find him through Festus's music shop on the Via Sacra. I never told him about Jesus Christ. The right hour never seemed to come. I wanted to do it before I left home, but even my mother and father had not understood and I felt sure that he would not listen. I think that the Master does not want us to talk about him at the wrong time. But now I have no

choice of time, and there are things which I must say to Marcus. Tell him, for my sake, to find out about Jesus Christ, and to try to be like him, because then he will be happier than he and I have ever known how to be in our whole lives, even in the laughing days when we were boys together at home. It means being thrilled all the time by the hope of doing something to please him. It doesn't really make any difference—I see now—whether you do that by living like him or by dying like him.'

"His voice weakened a little and I thought that he would stop talking, but I moistened his lips and he began again, and his hand held mine almost with strength. There was a tender, amused little sound in his voice, and I felt that he was smiling. 'Marcus and I,' he said, 'had our first military training together and our rough sergeant used to repeat over and over in the same words that we had a duty to our bodies and Romans always did their duty. How it bored Marcus! It was like one note on a trumpet to him, prolonged until the nerves couldn't

bear it. Tell him for me that there is nothing like that when you accept the discipline of Jesus Christ. You have to do hard things, but they satisfy your innermost heart. You have to do your duty, but it's like carrying out your dearest wish. He tells you one thing, but in the most varied and beautiful ways like all the notes in music used to make a song. And it's like listening to music when you hear him call you into the service of the spirit. Old Septimus was all wrong. Our duty is to the spirit, not to the flesh.' '*Not to the flesh*'—Florus repeated this several times in a whisper, as I held him. And then he drew himself up straight, quite away from my shoulder, and as I flashed the lantern upon his face I saw, there in the rain and gloom, that it was lighted from within. 'Before you came,' he said, 'as I lay here first I could not think of anything but the pain in my body. Then I heard steps near me—not stealthy ones as yours were just now, but strong and firm as if whoever was there was not afraid. And he came around the bush and, although it

was so dark, I could see that he was tall and beautiful, and was not dressed in uniform but in something white and clean. He bent down over me and gathered me in his arms and all the pain left me. I must have fallen asleep in the comfort of it, for I knew nothing more until you came. I am thankful that I have been allowed to live to send my love to Marcus. Tell him about Jesus Christ'—and just as he said these words he flung his arms out in the darkness as if he saw some one and wished to reach him. Then he fell back against me quite dead, and I laid him with the other dead. On the next day we buried them."

The quiet voice of the centurion had broken once or twice in the course of his story, but he did not linger after he had finished nor seem to expect any answer from Marcus. He rose and said, "I think we must go now and allow Festus to close his shop." As they came into the outer room Festus said "Good night" in his friendly way, but, to the great relief of Marcus, did not seek to detain them. Outside the

door, Aulus turned away with a simple "Good-bye." Marcus could be alone with Florus. This part of the street was quiet, and the evening was calm and sweet, as if set free from the stains of the day. From youth to youth, from the young living to the young dead, went out a swift and passionate longing. In it was lost all memory of the Subura tavern. Marcus went back to his own lodging and sat alone. He had much to think of. There was Florus dead on a distant field of battle, but seeming much nearer to him than he had seemed during their last year together in Rome. There was Florus a boy in Fori Novi—ah, how close he came, as Marcus's thoughts crept back and back through the receding years! Was that his laugh he heard? Was that the smell of heliotrope crushed under his feet by the old well-house? Suddenly Marcus burst into tears, and cried long and bitterly. The young tears washed his heart clean for the entrance of a new shame, a new hope.

PEACEABLE FRUIT

I

"So Domina has a new pearl necklace! I imagine Nile gold has been spent at Dento's." The speaker laughed cynically, looking around the servants' hall. He was the butler, and had been waiting on the table that evening when Calpurnius and Felicia had been dining alone at home with their house guest, Sergius. The remark set tongues loose. Since the evening was an easy one, some of the servants had assembled before bedtime in their own comfortable lounging room. The *cellarius,* who had the keys to the storeroom and cellar, had brought out generous supplies, and the *atriensis* who kept the family accounts winked an eye when he saw them. The valet of Calpurnius, two chambermaids, the young Greek girl who had recently been brought into the household to

take care of the little daughter, several footmen, and one of the men who carried the litters in the streets were already making merry. At the mention of their mistress's new pearl necklace the Greek girl smiled knowingly. "Oh, I've seen him look at her often enough," she said, "and the other day when Dominus was out and he was drinking a glass of wine with Domina in her private sitting room (I had been telling stories to the little mistress on the other side of the room) I saw him kiss the cup just where she had touched it." "Who is he anyway?" asked the street servant. "I took him to see one of the admirals the other day. Is he high up in the Navy?" "Yes," the *atriensis* answered. "He's a prefect of the flotilla of coast guards at the mouth of the Nile. He is a second cousin of Master's, and he hasn't been home for several years. They had just been married when he left. He seems to know that Domina has not lost any beauty since those days." "Is Master on to it, do you think?" said the *cellarius,* looking at the butler. "He's

thinking of other things,'' the butler answered, with a laugh in which everybody joined. ''What's the point of that?'' Greek Rhoda asked, flashing her black coquettish eyes around the room. ''The point of that, my little magpie,'' the valet answered, ''is that perhaps he is worrying more about whether a certain fair lady on the Esquiline will like the sapphires he bought at Dento's yesterday than how pearls landed here on the Pincian.'' Rhoda's face was alive with interest. ''Who began it?'' she questioned eagerly. But just then the door opened and in came Felicia's maid, a girl about sixteen years old. Her face was gentle and full of charm, and the carriage of her straight slender body might have been envied by many a fine lady of Rome. She had acquired it all unconsciously by balancing on her head copper pitchers of water in the Sabine village of Fori Novi near which Calpurnius and Felicia had a country villa. In the happy days of their marriage, when they were still lovers, they used to seek refuge here from resorts as well as from the

city. The vintage was their favorite season, when great baskets of grapes glowed against the dark soil, and the pale green of the vine leaves. But last summer they had stolen a month to enjoy their informal country garden where flowers and shrubs were allowed to grow freely, unhampered by conventional design. On the day of their arrival, while driving through the village, they had noticed the beauty of a girl who was drawing water at the public spring, and had succeeded in attracting her to their establishment. The girl's father had been a slave and she herself was willing to enter the personal service of a lady who seemed to her very lovely and gracious. Her name—oddly enough for an Italian girl—was Irene, and often, amid the fever and fret of Rome, she seemed to Felicia to bring a breath of Sabine peace and sweetness. Now, as she entered the servants' hall, silence fell as if no one wished to continue the conversation, but there were no unfriendly faces turned toward her and she smiled at them all in her pleasant way. She

went and sat down by little Rhoda, her tranquil face, framed in hair parted simply and caught in a modest knot at the nape of her neck, contrasting sharply with the vibrant, changeful, piquant face of the Greek girl, whose hair curled across the tops of pink ears and down the white brow into laughing eyes. "Began what?" Irene asked, looking around at them. There was a moment's hesitation, and then the *atriensis* said, "Well, we were wondering whether it was Dominus or Domina who first grew tired of the other." The color flashed up in Irene's face. "We ought to be ashamed of ourselves," she exclaimed, "to talk about their private affairs like this. They are good and kind to us, we don't have to suffer what most households have to suffer. Look at you now, having all the wine you want—we are not afraid of being interrupted in taking our pleasure. We all know many a set of servants who tremble when they are called upon to do anything for their master or mistress. But we like to serve Dominus and Domina.

They used to be so happy together when I first began to serve them. It was the most beautiful thing to see them at their villa. He never came into the house without at once going to her rooms. In the evening they used to sit out on the balcony over the lake and she would play the lute and sing songs to him, and he always seemed sorry when any of the neighbors came to call. The little mistress was born there, you know," Irene went on, speaking especially to Rhoda. "Even last summer they were the proudest and happiest people. Domina let me take a great deal of care of the child, after I came." Rhoda giggled, and said in a high shrill voice, "Well, she doesn't bother you much with her now, or herself either. Sometimes I should think she didn't know she had a child at all. As for Dominus, he never looks at Felicla. "For that matter, how can he," the butler spoke up. "Let me tell you that Dominus is an important man in the city. He has to go to the Palatine every day. He is a director in the largest shipping

company of Rome and Egypt. He is making money fast." "Yes, enough to buy sapphires this week for one lady and rubies next week for another," put in the valet with a cynical laugh. "Well, anyhow," the butler went on, "he has no time to stay around home making love to his own wife or petting a mere girl." Irene again interrupted. "Oh, don't," she said, "don't talk about them like that. Sometimes I think some evil spirit must have come into the house, and made them both unhappy. I know that Domina loves her daughter as much as she ever did. It is just this terrible Rome. It somehow gets between husbands and wives, and mothers and children. Because her husband is important and growing rich and doing big things she has to be a grand lady, and she has to have grand friends, and she can't always be around at bedtime, and she can't always spend the morning with the child as she used to do. She has all of the house to manage, and all the girls who do the spinning and the sewing, and she even has to look after the library and the Greek boys who

are copying the books. I don't think anybody 'began it'—whatever you mean by that—except something wicked in the air round about us. I wish that man had never come from Egypt. Just because he is here for a little while and on leave, he's got plenty of time, and I don't wonder that he thinks she is very beautiful.'' Irene's voice broke almost into a sob, and the *cellarius* pounded on the table with his cup. ''Come, come,'' he said, ''don't let's spoil this free evening quarreling over our betters. 'Tisn't any of our concern whether they are happy or unhappy. Let them worry over their own pearls and sapphires and hearts and morals. Here, Rhoda, child, I'll throw dice with any man here for one of your kisses. Let's take the hour as it comes.''

II

If Irene was unhappy about her mistress, Felicia herself reached that evening an acute stage of misery. Last autumn she and Calpurnius

had come to a parting of the ways in the development of their common life. They were both well-born, of the equestrian rank, and even distantly affiliated with the higher aristocrats of the senatorial order. Felicia, like other girls of her class, had been fairly well educated in literature and music. The families on both sides had given many proofs of Roman constancy and courage and temperance, but the growing wealth of Calpurnius and the personal beauty of Felicia, taken together with their youth, put them into the gayest set in Rome. Neither had the sternness of character which tends to preserve traditional virtues over against the theories of a more modern life. Felicia's older sister, Honoria, belonged to the emancipated women of Rome. She had even studied philosophy seriously, and she had also fitted herself to practise law. Although she could not appear in public as an advocate, she was able privately to transact considerable legal business. This caused a great deal of ridicule in Felicia's own set, while, if their

mother had lived, she would have been equally disturbed by the self-indulgence of her younger daughter and the extraordinary aggressive independence of the older. Between them they seemed completely to have shattered the family tradition of women at once strong in mind but domestic in habits. Their modern excesses, however, were antipodal. If Honoria forgot her heart in her head, the chief trouble with Felicia was that she never had any chance to think at all—to see the trend of her pleasures and emotions. Her social engagements left her almost no time with her little girl and they certainly left her no time to be a companion with herself. She and all her set went feverishly from one thing to another. Even if it was not considered good form to have open scandals, any more than it was to get drunk in public, it was also considered stupid and even "rustic" for husbands and wives to go about much together or to seem devoted to each other. Felicia herself could not have told when the separation between herself and Calpurnius began

to be serious. At first, perhaps, they had both played the game of flirting with other men and women. Then Felicia began to feel that Calpurnius was more than playing a game. Her friends had insinuated things. There was always somebody to say, "Not that I believe it, dear, but they are saying." Felicia's pride was touched, her love was hurt, her jealousy awakened. Just at this time Sergius had come home from Egypt and caught her fancy. He made love to her in a way that intoxicated her with her own charm and beauty. Until just now it had all been a matter of innuendo lurking beneath badinage, of little devotions and tender gallantries. But yesterday he had kissed the cup where she had touched it with her lips, and after the child and her attendant had been sent from the room he had kissed her very lips. That night, for the simple family dinner which the withdrawal of an invitation from some friends at the last moment made possible, she had put on, in order to make a fresh impression, a string of pearls which had belonged to her

mother. She had not worn them for a long time, having taken to brilliant colors in clothes and jewels, and Calpurnius must have forgotten about the old heirloom. Storming into her bedroom that night, after Irene had finished her duties, he accused her of receiving the pearls from Sergius. Shocked because she was in this case so innocent, and enraged that he should not be granting her the liberties which he seemed to assume for himself, she answered his frenzied jealousy with frenzied reproaches. All the evil, ugly thoughts that had lain dormant between them stalked out into the open. Could either ever forget the dividing things that they said to one another, there in that room once consecrated to married concord, to mutual fidelity?

III

If Honoria had known the latest incidents, probably she would not have chosen the next day for a visit to her younger sister. For some

time she had been much troubled by Felicia's life. She had little patience with people who (as she expressed it) could not play the game straight—who made a mess of their obligations and who came to disaster through an ungoverned emotionalism. In addition to this somewhat austere attitude, she had felt a peculiar tenderness for Felicia since their mother died, and would have been glad to save her from unhappiness. For herself, she had never wanted marriage or children, but she understood her younger sister well enough to know that only in a normal and serene marriage and its accompanying home life could she find the fulfilment of her nature. To-day she came determined to talk the matter out with Felicia. To her surprise she found her willing to talk, but more intensely bitter than she had anticipated. Honoria heard the banal story of an injured wife, angered by her husband's injustice and jealous of the liberty claimed for himself. Felicia was even in a mood to contemplate divorce, and wanted her sister's legal ad-

vice. Honoria had expected to direct appeals to a woman given over to enjoyment and playing lightly with emotional fires. Instead she found an oddly cold and implacable Felicia whom she scarcely recognized. Personally she liked Calpurnius, and in general found it easy to take a man's point of view. She thought that the wrong between him and Felicia was about equally divided, and she was anxious to bring about a reconciliation between them. If she failed with Felicia she meant to go to her brother-in-law almost as man to man. At the end of her talk this morning with her sister, it certainly seemed as if this would be necessary. To every one of Honoria's arguments Felicia had an answer. If it was necessary to preserve the traditions of the family, why had Honoria herself claimed the right of a modern woman to live her own life? If one woman could shake off social customs for the sake of a career, certainly another woman had the right to save her own dignity by getting rid of a man who was insulting her at every turn. Again, when Hon-

oria pleaded for reasonableness, for compromise, even for a sense of justice toward Calpurnius, Felicia hurled at her her ignorance of the marriage bond and its implications. And finally, when Honoria took her stand on the ethical principle of fulfilling obligations once assumed, of doing to the bitter end one's duty by child if not by husband, then Felicia took her stand on the principle, so often enunciated among her friends, that one's own individual right to happiness is a sacred thing, that one's highest "duty" is a fulfilment of one's personal needs. At last Honoria gave up the struggle, and rose to go. Felicia, in her charming way, threw her arm around her neck and kissed her, and said, "Don't be a prude, Honoria, you're too clever for that. Come and see Felicla before you go. Whatever happens, I'm not going to let her suffer."

As the two women came into the beautiful *peristylum* where early flowers were being forced into bloom, and a graceful bronze Narcissus was gazing at himself in the basin of a

silvery fountain, they were sudden spectators, without being seen themselves, of a rather striking little domestic incident. Rhoda was playing with Felicla. Her attendance upon the child was always an offense to Honoria, who believed in the good old Roman custom, among people of position, of entrusting children to the care of an older woman, usually a relative, who could transmit even to little girls and boys the nobler Roman virtues of self-control, dignity and industry. She knew the danger of the present fashion of turning at least the girls over to some young Greek woman, clever, of course, and an admirable teacher, but without standards of conduct. In her sister's house she saw how Rhoda indulged Felicla in all her little caprices, allowing her to fret or smile according to her passing mood. To be sure, she had a gift for telling stories and for training the child to recite bits of poetry, but Honoria was enough of a Roman not to be satisfied with this. At the present moment, both Rhoda and the child were dancing up and down, clapping their hands and

laughing at a young boy who, hurrying past them, as if in answer to a summons, had tripped over an obstacle, evidently set up by Rhoda, and lay sprawling on the mosaic pavement. Felicia recognized him as her newest house-slave recently brought from the farm at Fori Novi. Of course, as the latest comer, he would be the butt of all the other servants and the victim of many practical jokes. Ordinarily she would have thought nothing of the occurrence, although she did dislike seeing her own little daughter imitating the jeers and harsh laughter of Rhoda. But just then, Irene, coming from the *atrium,* stepped around one of the columns of the *peristylum* and entered the group. The boy, who was about ten years old, turned toward her with such a wistful and yearning expression that it stirred the hearts of both Felicia and Honoria. Irene's face looked very sweet to them as she put her hand on the boy's shoulder and smiled at him, and straightened his tunic and told him not to worry, that he would soon be happy in this house where all the

servants were happy working for a kind master and mistress. The little scene made an impression upon both women. Honoria was struck, as she always was, by Irene's quiet composure and tranquilizing manner. As she went off she thought to herself that her little sister, in spite of being so grand a lady, was not unlike the young house-slave, tripping over an obstacle and needing to be picked up and comforted by some strong and gentle hand. Her heart was heavy as she went back to her litter to be carried on to the Forum where she had an important appointment. She had failed utterly in her family errand, and was afraid of what might happen even before another day.

What Felicia saw in the incident led to an amazing thing. In spite of her black mood, she remained mistress of her household, and she wondered why her maid took so much pains to help the new slave. With this thought in mind she called Irene to come to her room to look over the dress which she wished to wear that evening. Its grapevine embroidery needed to

be retouched here and there—it was to be worn with the amethysts and topazes which seemed to carry the color of the purple and amber grapes. She had been willing to wear the dress an unusual number of times because of the associations of its design with the vintage at Fori Novi. To-day the dress served as a starting point for asking Irene some questions. They began with the new boy—why was Irene so good to him? The maid told her that she knew just the little cabin on the farm that the boy came from, and knew his mother and the family of brothers and sisters he had left behind, and the baby kid which belonged especially to him and which he missed so much in the large city house where nothing was his own, and he himself was at the beck and call of everybody. Felicia, leaning back upon the yellow silk cushions which were an admirable foil for her soft dark hair, watched the skilful hands of her maid at the embroidery frame. "Irene," she said presently, abruptly leaving the conversation she had started—"Irene, your embroidery really ought

to be exhibited. Don't you want me to get you into the procession of skilled workers at the next festival of Minerva? You must be a prime favorite of hers. Did you use to say your prayers to her especially in the temple at home?'' A tide of color swept into the girl's face. She looked at her mistress with wide-open, startled eyes. Then, as if nerving herself to a great effort, she said: ''Last summer, just before I came to you, I stopped going to the temple altogether, and I can't say prayers any longer to Minerva because I have learned to love Jesus Christ.'' Felicia looked at her with amazement. ''And who, child, is Jesus Christ?'' she said. ''What has he to do with your prayers?'' And then Irene told Felicia the story as she had had it from Sabina, the wife of the baker at Fori Novi. Sabina had lost her only son in the war over in Armenia and had been almost dying with grief until a letter came from him which explained to her about Jesus Christ, and made her able to pick up her life again, and to be cheerful and courageous

and help everybody round about in the village. Felicia listened with growing interest. "Irene," she said, "if Sabina wanted this Jesus Christ you talk about to comfort her for her son, what did you want of him?" Irene stretched her hand out toward the purple embroidery silks and took a needleful as she answered, "I am afraid Domina will be bored by my poor little affairs, but I was very unhappy when Sabina came to help me. My mother had died and my father had married again, and I found it very hard to live with my stepmother, she was so different from the rest of us. I used to cry myself to sleep at night and I was tired and unhappy all day long." "*You* tired and unhappy," Felicia interjected. "Why, what caught me first in your face was its look of happiness, and ever since you have lived with me you have seemed so full of peace and sweetness and contentment. You haven't changed just because you live with us. I wanted you because you were so happy when I found you. Go on and tell me what Sabina did to help you."

Irene smiled shyly. "She told me," she said, "that everything would come out all right if I acted toward my stepmother exactly as I would if I loved her and if she loved me. She was so sure about Jesus Christ that I couldn't help believing that he was real, and she told me that the only thing he wanted of us was to love each other. She said that if I forgot all the differences in my stepmother and just tried to love her I would love her, and that when I loved her everything would come out right and true and happy." "And did it?" Felicia asked. "Oh, Domina!" Irene said, dropping her silks and the embroidery frame, and turning toward her mistress with her hands stretched out appealingly. "Oh, Domina, it came so beautifully true. It was just love I needed to feel, and then father was happy and my two little sisters were happy and my stepmother was happy and I was happy. My heart sang all day long and the world was so beautiful and when you came that day by the fountain it was all part of the happiness. You were so gracious and

you have been so kind to me ever since, and there can't be anything the matter if people just love each other. Nothing else makes any difference except love.'' The girl caught herself abruptly as if she had gone too far and plunged her hand back into the silken threads. Silence fell in the room. In the heart of Felicia a strange thing began to happen. Some sweet alchemy seemed to be transforming the bitterness that had been lying there so heavily. Honoria had begged her to be reasonable, to be just, to be dutiful, but how could she be when Calpurnius had been so unjust and so unreasonable toward her, and so forgetful of his own duty? But now, what was it Irene was saying? —Irene sitting over there so quietly—Irene, whose voice always soothed her, whose hands were always gentle, whose face was always happy. She didn't need to be reasonable toward her husband, or just. She didn't need to do her duty by him. She needed only to love him—to act as if she loved him, and then everything would come right. What a strange, new,

and yet sweet, thing this was! Should she try it? Of course, the "Jesus Christ" of it was all a mystery, some new superstition, perhaps, among the common people, but this idea of *love,* love so simple, so easy to act upon immediately, as soon as Calpurnius came back into the house —should she not yield herself to it, put it to the test?

At this moment she heard her husband step past her door. In the old days he would have sought her at once when he returned to the house. Waves of memory broke over her, swelling into a floodtide of determination to act as she would have done when they loved each other. She sprang from her couch, hurried to the door and opened it. "Dear heart," she said, flinging wide her arms, "welcome home!" Her husband's arms closed about her. A broken murmur came from the lips buried in her hair. Irene slipped away unnoticed, with a little smile on her face and in her heart a quick little prayer of thanksgiving to Jesus Christ.

A MORE EXCELLENT WAY

I

Two Greeks were driving back to Rome, after dining with Seneca at his villa on the Appian Way. Their open gig, hired from a station just within the Porta Capena, was a poor protection against the cold wind which blew in raw, fitful gusts. Huge black clouds flapped across the sky like gigantic bats, and the tombs which lined the great highway looked twice their natural size. The gloom was oppressive and even the Cynic philosopher, Demetrius, and the skeptic Theophilus involuntarily felt glad of each other's company as their one horse picked his way uncertainly along the shadowy road toward the unseen city.

After a silence Theophilus, relaxing a little his tense hold on the reins, said: "Did you notice how quiet Seneca was at dinner? and how

depressed he seemed afterwards when he was talking with his nephew?'' ''Yes,'' said Demetrius, ''I felt the grim presence of fear there—not a personal fear, because these Romans, whatever their philosophy, always show an extraordinary courage when they are in the grip of hostile circumstance—but the more nameless fear that haunts the good in days of evil.'' ''Do you mean the Emperor and his henchmen?'' Theophilus asked. ''No,'' the philosopher answered quickly, ''I mean injustice and unreason and greed and lust—I mean all the poisons that are sucking the life from the soul of humanity. Men like Seneca, who compromise, are afraid beneath their armor of wisdom. Only Thrasea faces the Stygian blackness with a limitless tranquillity.'' ''Tranquillity!'' the Athenian exclaimed, ''your tranquillity, your apathy, your eradication of desire appal me. Is there to be no warm passion, no joy, no light in our existence?''

Just as Theophilus spoke, at a sudden on-

slaught of shrieking wind the horse reared in terror. Emerging dimly from the darkness, they recognized the outlines of the temple of Mars the Avenger, close outside the city gate. Demetrius watched the horse quiet down, and then said, half lightly: "After all, Mars is the God of our day and generation. Most of our light comes from his horrid glare." Theophilus remained intent upon his driving, and presently drew up at the carriage station within the city limits. From there the two friends were to walk to their lodgings. A lout of a boy, evidently waked from sleep by their call, came out to take the horse, but could not tell them how much they owed, nor answer their questions about the direction of the streets. His master, he said, was in the house opposite, where the light was. "Drinking late, I suppose," said Theophilus, as he started to cross the street, "but he'll probably be able to take in his money." "Don't forget," Demetrius called after him—"don't forget to ask the way."

II

The interruptions at their house-door, incident to the neighborhood, always disturbed Festus more than they did his mother, Anna. The house showed a simple and modest refinement, as if harmony were the principle of Festus's daily life whether among the lyres and flutes in his workshop on the Via Sacra or here at home under the shadow of the great gateway. It was oddly placed in a noisy, restless neighborhood, where travelers leaving or coming into the city by the Appian Way were likely to halt on all sorts of errands. Directly opposite was the station owned by Nicys, at which horses and carriages for a journey could be obtained and exchanged. Shops catering to every need crowded in and fastened like leeches upon the passing tourists. Eating houses and wine rooms of various grades sought the patronage of senators or slave. All day long and into the night the street and alley ways were vocal with shrill cries and resounded with the clattering

feet of horses and mules. But the house of Festus preserved within itself a quiet apartness.

In the eyes of their friends this apartness seemed as characteristic of Anna as of Festus. But when any demand came from without, her courtesy turned toward it as serenely as the needle to its magnet, while his seemed rather to leap, with a valiant effort, to its post. Anna was no longer young. Her hair was gray, parted in the middle and curving across a low sensitive brow, but her skin was smooth and tender, like a child's, with a little flush in her cheeks like a pale pink rose. Her body was slender and small and graceful like the stem of a birch-tree in a soft winter landscape. Her ways were so courteous that even a chance acquaintance felt especially singled out by her for consideration. She never made any difference between people, because her manners clung to her as a quality of her own, not to be changed by the attitude of others.

To-night through the storm into this place of

quiet had come an intimate group of men and women to eat supper together and to exchange confidences about their "new way." Only Nicys and Eucarpia, near neighbors, were being welcomed for the first time at such a gathering. He was a big, burly fellow, with a rubicund face between large projecting ears, and a bass voice which, until a few months ago, had boomed abroad the high spirits of a prosperous man free from troubles. Then Fortune, the jade, had turned against him. His wife, after fifteen years of health and devotion to him and his business, had sickened mysteriously. She was always tired now, and, worse still, she seemed tired of him. He had seen her shrink sensitively when he came into the house from the stables, instead of hurrying to him as in the old days as soon as he shouted from the threshold. In his growing despair he had come to Anna, who had more common sense than any woman he knew. There was no nonsense about her. You could talk straight out to her, even if she did look so gentle and so modest. She

had already made things much better for him at home just by coming often. When she was there Eucarpia seemed different, friendly again and more attentive to what he was saying about the business—and what with the stupid postilions, and the disease that had struck the horses, and the stormy weather of this slow spring there was certainly enough to talk over when he could get a sensible ear. Nicys did not know that every nerve in Eucarpia's body, exhausted by his boisterous energy, had soothing from the quietness of Anna. Nor was he conscious that his own self-confidence grew less flamboyant in paying tribute to her inner power. He would have said that he valued in her a direct and penetrating common sense. In reality he was chiefly influenced by a superiority of nature as potent with other people as it was unrealized by her. But, at any rate, he was devoted to her and quite willing to accept with his wife an invitation to a special kind of supper and meeting.

Eucarpia had never seen a room quite as rest-

ful as the one in which they were eating. The lamps in the corners on tall, plain standards and the lower ones set on the table were so pleasant to look at—she wondered if they cost a great deal more than the clumsy lot which Nicys had bought for their last supply at home. The mixing bowl and wine cups, too, had such pretty shapes, although they were only earthen ware, like her own. The food seemed tempting to her—the fine wheat bread and fresh asparagus in place of the greasy platters of sausages and bacon to which she was wearily accustomed. On the wall opposite her in the central panel was painted a beautiful picture. Her friendly neighbor at the table, Lucius, told her that it had been done by a good Greek artist, and was a birthday present to Festus from a jeweler whose child he had healed and who had become his ardent friend. Festus had chosen the subject. It showed a young Orpheus, debonair and joyous, playing his lyre under an olive tree on a hillside and drawing the birds and beasts of the wood to him by the lure of his music. "He is

like Jesus Christ," Lucius added with a smile. Jesus Christ—it was really to hear more of him, of whom Anna would talk only with great reserve, that Eucarpia had wanted to come to-night.

Nicys had no eye for the refinements of the room. But after supper he became intensely interested in some letters from Antioch and Ephesus and Corinth which Festus read, explaining to him that they came from other "Christians," their "brothers in Christ." They were written in Greek, but had been translated before the meeting by one of the guests, Matho, a Greek government slave and copyist in the Palatine Library. And they proved to be full of amazing references to a city of God in which citizenship did not depend upon Roman law, and to a family of God in which all were sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, whether they lived in Rome or in Greece or in Syria.

Nicys was by no means a stupid man and his business brought him into contact with all kinds

of travelers. His imagination—although he would have not known how to say so—was always being drawn out through the gates of the city, along the great highways, toward places very remote from his corner of Rome. Now, as Festus was reading, he was suddenly caught by a fascinated wonder. What was this strange "news" that traveled back and forth over the long roads and across the seas of the Empire? Save for his faith in Anna he might have listened suspiciously, smelling treason or at least the wordy extravagance of fools. But trusting her as he did he was more beset by curiosity. Whatever it was, this traveled "news" filled these people with an extraordinary joy. They seemed enthusiastic and buoyant—like men whose business is never slack. The idea occurred to him in this way because he realized with surprise that they had some business or interest in common. Before coming over this evening he had wondered why members of different trade-guilds wanted to get together. But here were Festus and Lucius, for

example, sharing something that seemed as close—or was it closer?—to each than his own craft. They were not talking of their daily routine or even, with an enlarged importance, of the general affairs of their guilds, but about a new faith, a new hope, a new love. Dimly Nicys guessed at the situation. No one of these men and women held this faith composedly as an inheritance or a part of family tradition Rather, each had won it as an individual possession, in an emotional crisis of life. To some, perhaps, it had come full flowered, while in the hearts of others it had dropped like a seed to fructify in the daily ways of living; but to all, certainly, it was a new thing, a break from the old order of thought, a wonder still and a high romance. These people came together just because they could not help sharing with each other a discovery which to them seemed full of power, of sweetness, of joy. Their frankness was not the easy babbling of sentimentalists, but the welling of clear streams of feeling across the barriers of ordinary reserve.

Nicys looked at Eucarpia across the table and saw her head erect, her eyes shining, as he had not seen them for many a day. He looked at Anna, and she smiled at him in a way that set him at ease and welcomed him among these friends of her house. Anna never put any obstacle in your way, least of all herself. She had not joined in the conversation, but now she turned to her son and suggested the singing of a hymn—"one of peace at the heart of storms," she said, the rose color in her cheeks deepening with the betrayal of an inward thought. Festus sent a boy for his lyre. A blast of wind pierced shriekingly into the room, and withdrew in a sullen howl. Festus rose suddenly and stretched out his hands in a compelling gesture. Then he prayed as Nicys had never heard anyone pray before. He was not placating his God, but laying his soul bare before him. In the flood of his desire all formulas seemed swept away. Passionately he pleaded that the way might be made clear to all who traveled in darkness. Nicys thought of the throng without

—how well he knew it on such a night!—searching, stumbling, cursing, through the stormy streets. What was this that Festus was saying? —"We ask it in the name of him who is the way and the truth and the life." It was the end of the prayer, and Nicys felt as if some incommunicable strain of music had come to a sudden end, without being resolved.

The boy had brought the lyre, but Festus, with a look at his mother, suggested that they should go to the *atrium* where they could sing with greater ease. Matho had translated still another psalm since their last meeting, and he had set the words to his instrument.

"He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High"

—the preliminary notes rose in his vibrant tenor as he led the way into the larger room.

But for Nicys and Eucarpia the magical evening proved to be at an end. As the singers were gathering around the host to examine his new score, a quick draught of wind betrayed the

opening of the house door. The porter tiptoed in and informed Nicys that a traveler had come over from the stables and insisted on seeing him. It seemed considerate to make their farewells now, instead of disturbing the music afresh, even though they must leave a message for Anna who had not yet come from the dining room. Nicys, with unusual gentleness, expressed his regret to Eucarpia as they put on their rain cloaks. She smiled in her old way and slipped her fingers into his palm. "It is our business, isn't it," she said, "to make the way easier for travelers?" The porter opened the door upon an impatient Greek voice in the street anathematizing the darkness. He closed it upon a strain from the inner room high and clear:

"Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night."

III

Anna had stayed behind to give some gentle order to the maid—the household was served

with great simplicity—who came to set the room in order. Lucius lingered to talk with her as he often did. Of all the Christians whom he knew, men or women, she seemed to him to have most completely made her own the star which was in the gift of Jesus Christ. His own sensitive nature felt in her something more delicately made than himself and at the same time something so high, so starry that his friendship with her was mingled with a profound reverence. He, or Nicys, or whoever drew near her, became her beneficiary. She never talked about unselfishness, never seemed conscious of doing her duty by other people, was only perplexed and even a little distressed if people told her that she helped them. When Narcissus had said once that he thought that you should assure yourself every night before you went to bed that you had helped somebody, she had seemed startled. "But how can I?" she said to Lucius afterwards. "How can we ever be sure that we help each other?" And yet among all the men and women who believed in this new

religion of Love, nobody seemed to love as completely as Anna did. It must have been a native endowment, Lucius concluded, born with her in her cradle as physical beauty is born, and then cultivated and increased a hundredfold by the power of Jesus Christ within her. None who knew Paul wondered that even he turned to Anna on terms of peculiar personal intimacy.

To-night Lucius wanted especially to ask her about the imprisoned leader whom he had not been able to visit for some time. There was a boom in the building trades and he had been working almost more hours than there were in a day. A little shadow fell over Anna's face. "I saw him only this afternoon," she said, "and I found him very tired and very sad. Who do you suppose had been to see him? Honoria, the sister of the lovely young Felicia —I think you were here one evening when she came. It was very fine of her to let her maid bring her, and we all thought her exquisitely courteous—do you remember? I have seen something of her, and also at her house I have

met the sister. I had heard that Honoria was very learned and clever, but she met me the first time in a simple, natural way, and I felt at once for her a strong liking. Since then we have had several talks—I have found it unusually easy to talk with her because she is so honest. I knew that she had been very happy over her sister, but I never dreamed that she would herself go to see Paul. She had just left him when I arrived. He seemed more depleted than I have found him after arguments and discussions with the Jews. In surprise I said to him, 'But, if she came at all, she must have been willing to receive. She was not defiant, was she?' 'No, no,' he said wearily enough, 'but she held out the wrong cup to be filled. She brought me her intellect, and to that Jesus crucified is but a stumbling block and foolishness.' ''

Lucius leaned forward, eager to listen, and as the tender music swelled a little more loudly through the open door, seeming, as it were, to isolate and protect them in their comprehension of each other, Anna told him, as she had

told no one else, not even her son, of the hour of agony through which she had sat with Paul. To Lucius, because of his humility, she could entrust the torture of a great soul. Fevered and uncontrolled as Anna had rarely seen him, walking up and down the room without his usual regard for the soldier who must walk with him, their leader had poured out to her in burning words how Honoria, searching for his ideas, had entirely missed the central passion of his life, the beginning and the end of all his thinking. He had not made Jesus Christ real to her. His own passion had evidently sobbed itself out to Anna as if he had betrayed his Master, as if he had crucified him afresh, in failing to stamp his image forever on one more human heart.

But that had not been all. If the immensity of his regret seemed far to transcend the importance of Honoria, it was because Honoria's state of mind had widened out for him into sweeping memories of his own past. Once he, too, had relied upon the intellect, immured himself within the understanding, measured the

ways of God by the learning of men. And what had been the result? He had persecuted and denied Jesus Christ in the persons of his followers. He had breathed out fire and slaughter against those whom he should most have loved. He had been "exceeding mad" against those whose feet he should have washed in humility and reverence.

Sin—sin—the sin of his blindness—not even Christ could forever wash away the memories of it. Only when he was suffering for Christ, stoned or beaten with rods, hungering or thirsting, subjected to perils of land or sea, knowing weariness or painfulness—only then could he feel at peace. And here in Rome, well-treated, although in prison, fed and clothed, the victim of no sudden peril by day or night, there were hours when the madness of remorse had its way with him. Honoria, for all her responsive courtesy, had created for him such an hour. At its close—so he told Anna—all he could see was the face of Stephen, looking like an angel when they stoned him, and himself holding their garments

that they might the quicker kill him. Yes, Anna said to Lucius, it had been a cruel time for Paul, and she dreaded the night ahead for him—sleepless, probably, tortured by hatred of himself, agonized by thoughts of the world's blindness, exhausted by the futility of his yearning to bring light among the shadows.

She ceased speaking and they sat in silence for a long time. The music in the *atrium* had given place to a murmur of contented voices. The storm had died down. Belated moonlight strayed in and fell across a little bird in the picture of Orpheus playing the magic music. A thoughtful young slave, who had been allowed to share in the singing, slipped in to replenish the lamps. Anna's face had grown serene again. She clasped her hands quickly in a young, happy gesture that her friends loved and turned to Lucius with a smile. "Ah, dear friend," she said, "he is a great man, and he is our leader and guide and teacher. But he, too, needs just to become a child again. That would be the way of Jesus Christ."

ALMOST THOU PERSUADEST ME

HONORIA

To her brother, Sulpicius, Greeting.

I have some good news to send you and also an extraordinary personal experience to tell you about. They are connected, and I will give you the news first. Felicia and Calpurnius have straightened out their difficulties and are living the sort of married life which is worthy of the family. I have thought so often lately how happy Mother would have been if she could have seen Felicia conquering a difficulty with dignity and self-control. Calpurnius has been very fine on his side, and it is deeply satisfying to watch their restored happiness and to see the adornment that it is to their outside life. I was sorry in my last letter to give you such an anxious report of them, and I feel sure that you will be as glad as I am to know that they

are living once more in a reasonable and decent way.

But I mustn't let such a cold phrase end my story! I think I used that sentence to show you in your coldest mood how real this improvement is. As an actual fact, I could astonish you by bursting into a pæan on the change that seems to have swept over Felicia's nature. She no longer exhausts Calpurnius with moods and whims, but shows something of Mother's dignity and serenity in her relations with him. And then there is added—how shall I put it?—a new sort of gaiety which seems to bubble out of some inner spring of contentment. It is a perfectly charming thing to see. She is sweeter than she ever was, and peculiarly lovely to look at. She is finer, too, as a mother. You know how worried I have been over my little Felicla, left to grow carelessly without any shaping hand. Felicia is spending more time with her herself, and she has dismissed the clever but rather dangerous young attendant whom she had for her. Instead, she has secured a splen-

did governess, a distant connection of Calpurnius's Aunt Victoria. At last I feel completely satisfied about her sense of responsibility for her child.

Now, how do you suppose this happened? Dear brother of mine, it is a great comfort to know that you will really be interested in what I am going to tell you. How often, across lands and seas, your thoughts and mine have flown toward each other! I wonder if you think as often as I do of the old days at home when Felicia was little and you and I were already growing up, and of how Father used to talk to us both together about the books he was reading and the things he was thinking about, and then we would discuss it all over again from our own point of view while we were tramping around the country at Tusculum, or in winter evenings in the city in the schoolroom, when Mother and Father were out for dinner, and we had got rid of the servants. I wonder just what mood you will be in when this letter reaches you, off there in Egypt! Will it be im-

perially born of the public affairs and questions of state that crowd into your office? Or will it be keen-eyed and speculative, springing from a stimulating and racy hour of talk with your Greek friends? Or will you be a bit amused, a bit curious, and more than a bit meditative because you have come in from watching the Egyptian populace at some public religious ceremonial, which spells truth to them and nothing at all to you? Anyhow, whatever you have been doing, send your mind back home for an hour! Leave the Nile and float on the Tiber. Forget the palm trees, and remember our pines and ilexes. Forget the brilliant and unprejudiced Greek ladies, and think of me in all my Roman bonds—incurably the moralist! I want to write to you intimately of an intimate thing, and so I am trying to tempt you back into our old family interchange of thought. How thankful I am that I have no doubt of your wanting to meet me!

Well, I was going to tell you about what changed Felicia. It was an idea, and it was an

idea not suggested by me or by any one whom you could imagine. In fact, she rejected everything that we could say to her. Then her new little maid, Irene, a mere servant, a girl from their Sabine village, said this thing which seems to be transforming Felicia from an undisciplined, foolish girl bent on disaster into a tranquil and beautiful woman. Irene happened to tell her one day about a new religion which had shown her the way out of some family difficulties (I suppose they have them!)—the religion of a certain Jesus Christ. Irene made the great point that its chief requirement is love, and she put it in such a way that Felicia impulsively acted upon it and became reconciled with Calpurnius just at the most critical moment in their relations. What struck me at first was that it was so like Felicia to act on impulse! The result in this case, I thought to myself, was certainly excellent, but the same impulsiveness might lead her astray a hundred other times. Then little by little—for I have waited two months before telling you—I have come to be-

lieve that the impulse, whatever it was, is lasting on and is shaping Felicia's life in varied and significant ways. Of course, the swift reconciliation, the finding out that she and Calpurnius really were lovers, played its part in the experience. Evidently it gave Felicia a curious sort of confidence in Irene, and the girl certainly is a lovely young creature, the pure charm of whose own life it is impossible to deny. It seems that, through Irene, Felicia has come to know other followers of this new faith. They are higher up than Irene,—an extraordinary democracy prevails among them—but by no means in our own class. However, they have made a great impression upon Felicia, especially one older woman who evidently reaches the child's heart as nobody has since Mother died. To my astonishment, Felicia has succeeded in interesting Calpurnius in her ideas. He has not gone with her to any of the Christian meetings, but he is, I think, sympathetic with her lively interest in them.

Felicia, as you know, has nothing of the

fanatic in her, and I doubt if many of her own set will ever know of her change of religion, whether or not they notice any change in herself. Religion in general is so left out of their scheme of life that they don't waste any effort in questioning each other's! And Felicia will always live pleasantly and charmingly with her social group. But in her own household, where she rules, she is perfectly definite, and Felicla, with the consent of Calpurnius, is being trained in the "new way." One morning I found her being taught a little prayer which ended "for Jesus Christ's sake." Perhaps it seems less extraordinary to you than it did at the time to me. I know that life in the East has given you sympathy with differences in religious belief, and that the addition of one more form of worship or another would not surprise you—even, possibly, in your own family. I was so much interested in what you wrote once, during your first months in Egypt—that living close to another religion had effectually cured you of taking your own for granted, and had indeed

aroused in you a general interest in religion which you did not know you possessed. "If Isis, then why Juno, and if Juno, then why Isis?"

Do you begin to see that I am feeling for a path of approach to your mind and understanding? I warned you in the first sentence of this letter that I had had myself an extraordinary experience. Now I must gather my courage and try to convey it to you.

Felicia introduced to me her new friend, the older woman to whom I referred. This Anna, with her son Festus, is on intimate terms with the man who is recognized by the Christians as their leader. This man—it is like a list of *dramatis personæ,* isn't it!—this protagonist, so to speak, is a prisoner of the Prætorian Guards —a Jew sent over here from Jerusalem because he appealed to Cæsar when his own people brought him to trial for disturbing the peace with a new set of ideas. Now Anna made a great impression on me and what she told me about this Paul made a great impression, and

I decided to go and talk directly with him. The Imperial Government seems to be very liberal with him, Burrus makes no objections to his receiving visitors in his lodging at any time. I went this afternoon quite alone—you can imagine how horrified old Davus was when I gave him the address and how grieved he was when I made him stay outside with the other servants! Also, by what I understand was unusual good fortune, I found Paul alone except for the guard to whom he was linked. A group of Jews, leaving just as I came, were gesticulating and talking with apparent violence as they came through the door. I felt curiously isolated from every other fact of my life when I walked alone into a prisoner's room, in order to talk fundamentals with a man of whom I knew so little and who knew of me absolutely nothing. It was as if his bonds insured my freedom. He was still standing, having just said "good-bye" to his other visitors, and he asked me courteously to sit down when I told him that I was a Roman woman who wanted to talk with him

about the religion that he was preaching; I did not use Anna's name, because I wanted to preserve for myself the unique separateness of my act. In arranging our chairs he was very considerate of the young soldier fastened to him, and I noticed that the boy's eyes watched him with devotion. We talked in Greek, of course. He speaks it absolutely without accent, and much more idiomatically than I do. I wish that I could describe the man to you! I shall never forget him so long as I live. He is thin, and does not seem robust physically, but his body betrays constantly an active, nervous energy. He is slightly bald and has a long, pointed beard. His face has in it a curious power. His nose is characteristically Jewish, but somehow gives a sort of massive strength to the head. The eyes are deep set, under close and prominent eyebrows, very penetrating, very full of light and fire, in spite of a certain sorrow which seems to be ambushed in them. His voice is cultivated, and I soon made up my mind that his friend was right in telling me that he was

a scholar and thinker. It was indeed on that basis that I opened the talk. It would not have been fair to let him think for a moment that I was laden with a secret trouble as I imagine many must be who come to him. Telling him frankly what had interested me in his new ideas, I asked him if he would explain them to me more in detail.

Nobody came to interrupt us for almost an hour, and I shall always count that hour as the intensest one of my life. I said things to him that I have never said even to you, in that amazing mental intimacy at which people do sometimes snatch who know nothing personal or dividing about each other, and who will never have to face each other embarrassed by the memory of a naked confidence.

I cleared the decks at once by explaining that the religion of the people was nothing to me and that in philosophy I was more or less of an eclectic, with both temperamental and reasoned leanings toward the Stoa. And then we talked—yes, I suppose we talked—about Stoic-

ism and Epicureanism, and his own Christianity, and the Isis worship, and the cult of Cybele —certainly these names and many others passed and repassed between us. But as we went on I became conscious of a pulsing something, a vital breath, like a wind rising on the languid air, a stir and rush of thought. The matter was no longer in my own hands. Through the intellectual discussion which I had started pierced the realization that this man had no time for the husk, the rind, the cramping cover of ideas. He had accepted my terms at first merely for the sake of reaching my mind with a ray of the new light which, like some undreamed-of primal element, has created for him —the words are his own—a new earth and a new heaven.

I have heaped up my figures of speech in seeking to convey to you an impression. But it is the figure of light that I must leave in your imagination! Paul himself used it constantly, as if seeking to cleave an obscurant sky. Vividly, at every turn, he made the contrast be-

tween darkness and light. The contrasts insisted upon by our systems of thought have always interested me. The established religion calls us pious or impious, the Stoics call us sages or fools. The Epicureans set us off as dupes of religion or freedmen of science. Demetrius only lately happened to say to me that he sees men as slaves of ease or masters of hardship. We were dining at Seneca's—if you call it dining for a man who eats only dry bread at our Roman tables—and the two young poets, Lucan and Persius, had rushed in with news from the races, dividing us at once into Greens and Reds. Hence the crumb from the Cynic's loaf. And so on and on—each system has its own measure of division. But this man I was talking with, this prisoner bound to one of our soldiers, was visioning on the one side a whole world in darkness and on the other the illuminated ones, the children of light, who recognized a new law of Love. Darkness and light, darkness and light—these words he used over and over, until a strange sensation befell me. I

seemed to see myself coming down, down through long and dusky corridors of thought, to find at the end the open sky and wide sunlit spaces, and the radiance and freshness of a day that would never die.

But I must leave my sensations and try more intelligibly to pass on to you the ideas that emerged from the conversation. This, however, will be a difficult thing to do because the ideas for Paul focused and centred in a person, to me unknown and even incomprehensible. The person is little Irene's Jesus Christ—assuming heroic proportions when he is reflected through a brain like Paul's. Do you ask me if he is a god, like Osiris, like Isis, springing from the East and appearing in Rome? I lightly assumed that when I first heard of him—I was patient with Felicia only because the results of a new cult were so delightful. Anna, however, gave me the impression of worshiping in human terms the remembered life of a man so good and so richly endowed with personality that he became for others a norm and an inspiration.

I remember once hearing Seneca say that one of the most practical ways of living well was to pick out a master—Cato, for example, if you liked an austere one, or some gentler Laelius—and follow him. Choose one, he said, whose own life has satisfied you and then picture him always to yourself as guide and as pattern. "You can never straighten a crooked thing"—his vivid phrase stayed by me—"unless you use a ruler." Anna seemed to me to have found in Jesus the sort of "ruler" recommended by our arch-Stoic. This is amazing when you consider the quite uninteresting facts of his life as they give them to you. He was a common workman who lived some thirty years ago in Palestine. He evidently had a religious mission and native powers of persuasion, because, when he could get time from his work, he went about from village to village, acquiring a following among the lower classes. But his ideas were obnoxious to the authorities—revolutionary, I imagine—and after a while they crucified him in Jerusalem as a dangerous character. Whether he was an agi-

tator or not, he seems to have made upon his immediate friends and followers an indelible impression which they have passed on to those who never saw him.

To me, as you will readily understand, all this did not seem particularly interesting—perhaps I am too cold for hero worship, too indifferent to personal judgments to put my mind, however inferior, into any one's keeping. Seneca's advice caught my attention without persuading me. I have always yielded more easily to abstractions and principles of thought than to their exemplification, usually so inadequate, in some specific personality. So I had dismissed Anna's feeling for Jesus about as lightly as I dismissed Irene's.

But with Paul I had no choice, in that hour which he dominated. I received an extraordinary impression, connected with that other impression of which I just spoke. It was as if, whenever and wherever I emerged from darkness, I found a Person clothed in light, from whose touch sprang the radiant and immortal

day. At any rate (for I must rein myself in with terms comprehensible to you), I recognized that this Jesus becomes the central point of all that Paul teaches. Just how far he is to him a master in Seneca's sense, or a divine personage, was not clear to me. Sometimes I thought he was talking of a personal friend, sometimes of an idea, according to Plato's use of the word. Certainly every question of mine led to Jesus Christ. As far as I can make out, on thinking it over, the two words taken together indicate the Personality which, in Paul's thought, animates all laws and principles of life. The "law of love," the "law of spirit"—whatever law emerged in our conversation—was transformed from an abstraction into an issue of man's highest personality. I am sure there is a Platonic strain in it somewhere, as if among the Ideas laid up in heaven were that of a perfect humanity, made known to consciousness, and hence usable as a pattern, under a specific name. The transition from the good carpenter in Palestine, whom

Paul had only heard of, to an all-animating Personality seems to have been made by way of a resurrection after crucifixion. This whole matter, however, is obscure to me. The particular story is absurd on the face of it. Yet Paul reiterated that he preached "Jesus" crucified, and also that if "Christ" had not risen from the grave, then all his preaching was in vain. I cannot tell you what he meant. I have no idea now, nor had I then. Only then—*then*—and this was another strange part of that strange hour's experience—I was burned by the man's eyes, set astir by his voice, shaken by a passion that sheathed him like a flame, swept onward by gusts of thought that seemed to rise, with the roar of wings, from the recesses of life itself.

But you know me well enough to know that this vicarious emotion of mine was momentary. The gusts passed, leaving me still in pursuit of a clear path of understanding. And it was in this quieter mood that I received my final impressions from Paul. It is because of them that I am writing to you at all. As we talked on I

saw that much that these Christians teach is old and familiar. Monotheism, certainly, is philosophically assumed by most of us, in spite of the motley forms of our apparent religion. Also the assumption of an Eternal Purpose behind all phenomena is good Stoic dogma. As for "kindness" to people about you—why, you remember the Stoic phrase Mother liked so much —"for mortal to help mortal, that is God." Socrates in prison for conscience' sake four hundred years ago was just as considerate toward his jailer as this prisoner seems to be. The immortality of the soul—when hasn't somebody believed in it! I confess I don't, but Plato seems to have convinced himself of the proposition! All kinds of virtues—courage, honesty, temperance, faithfulness to duty—certainly we Romans don't need to be taught these things from Jerusalem. Even the curious mystical idea that Paul seemed once to suggest, of a divine person dying to save others as a sort of atonement, is not new. I found that long ago in my Greek studies, and I remember that you

wrote of it once in commenting on the Isis worship. Over against all your Oriental cults, however, and over against Hellenic Orphism, Paul's religion, as he explained it, seemed to me to have an especially fine element. Whatever it is, it is not a doctrine only for initiates while others are left outside. I liked the value that Paul assigned to every single individual. He said it was a corollary of the fact that Jesus Christ died for and saved the meanest as well as the highest. At any rate, I liked the clean breath of it all, the sweeping away of secrets, the free passage of the "light," to every man, woman, and child, rich or poor, learned or ignorant.

But I was speaking of the familiarity, in one form or another, of many of the specific things mentioned by Paul. And yet, Sulpicius, little by little the conviction grew upon me that here was a way of thinking and a way of acting stupendously new. I had a vision of a city different from Plato's or Zeno's or any other, fresh as a new planet dawning upon our eyes. It seemed

radiant with new things—with the new man, the new law, the new hope, the new joy, the new fruits of a new spirit. These words dropped constantly from the lips of Paul. I began to yield to them. I felt as if I were casting off one old garment after another, and would in the end find myself face to face with a new self living a new life.

Life—*life,* that, Sulpicius, is the word that took root in me that day, and may—who knows? —come to flower. Every Christian I have met seems to me to be amazingly alive. Vitality is their common possession. Even Irene has it, in a young and gentle way. It ripples through her like a little brook. In Felicia it is like a new fountain opened up to flood a shallow pool. In Anna this stream swells to a deep and tranquil river. In Paul it surges and engulfs like a mighty torrent. As far as I can make out, they have this life because they draw it out of eternal things and conceive it to flow on toward eternal things. They themselves would say that it springs from God in Jesus Christ, and seeks

God in Jesus Christ. They all—except Paul, of course, who sits there apart in forced inaction—they all keep right on living the littlest sort of everyday life. But I think that they live it in the presence of God and of eternity. I am aware that philosophers have preached some such sort of abstraction as this, but I must confess to you that I have never before in my whole life seen one individual, not even Mother, who was doing it as these Christians are. They seem set free from every inhibition, as if an inexhaustible power were there to draw upon, in proportion to the size of the cup that nature permits them to hold at the fountain's source.

It is late, and I have written this with my own hand. The lamp—the bronze one with the doves on it—do you remember?—burns low. Are you close to me in the shadows of the room, heart of my heart, or have I long since driven you away? Do you question me? No, I am not going to tell you that I have become a Christian. I shall never go with Felicia to Christian homes and meetings. I fancy I could not stand their

words. Nor shall I go back to Paul. But I have seen a star rising in the darkness; I have seen a fountain gushing in the sunlight. Good-bye, and may all good things be yours. Felicia and Calpurnius spoke of you especially this morning and sent their affectionate greetings. Felicla wants you to come home soon, and bring her an ivory doll, and a baby crocodile—please!

EPILOGUE

Because the men and women and children of whom I have written are my friends, I am glad not to look ahead even by a little to the tragic days of the great fire in Rome when some of them, victims of falsehood, must glut the vengeance of a mad Emperor. And yet I realize that the tranquil safety in which I leave them would not have fulfilled their own most passionate desires. Any of them who survived persecution, and from the vantage point of old age looked back upon their fellows for whom the Way led to an early death, must have agreed with Ignatius when he wrote from Smyrna to them and other Christians in Rome, where he anticipated his own martyrdom: "Christianity is not the work of persuasiveness, but of greatness, when it is hated by the world."

A. C. E. A.